



# CASCADE

## ‘Together a Chance’

Evaluation of the Social Worker for Mothers in  
Prison pilot project, 2021-2023

Second Interim Report

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May 2023



## CASCADE Infrastructure Partnership



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## Executive summary

The report focuses on the findings from the data collected during this review period of year two of the evaluation from May 2022-May 2023.

- We have evidence from multiple sources indicating that the role of the TaC Social Worker is invaluable to the prison institution. The TaC Social Worker provides specialist knowledge of safeguarding and of social services' processes, priorities, culture, language, and terminology which is of assistance both to mothers and to prison staff. The TaC Social Worker also helps to upskill staff in 'the legal landscape'.
- The TaC Social Worker acts as a conduit of information between local authority practitioners and the prison establishment, as well as between mothers and community practitioners.
- The TaC Social Worker' knowledge base does not seem to be held elsewhere within the institution and so there is little if any duplication of work between roles. Probation POMs have a similar knowledge base but it is reported they have insufficient understanding of the statutory children's social care environment to meet the needs and demands of mothers in prison.
- The vast majority of prison staff respondents stated that the prison Social Worker should be social work qualified.
- TaC Social Workers are acting as mediators for mothers to support their engagement with social services, advocating for contact with children appropriate to the circumstance, and ensuring that wherever possible relationships are maintained. This instils hope in mothers who have goals to work towards.
- The TaC Social Workers are providing information and education to community practitioners and have developed a resource to support professionals in explaining to children where their mothers are.
- 81 mothers have accessed the Together a Chance service since its inception in April 2021.
- 27% of the mothers report being in care or involved with social services as children.
- 78% of the mothers report being single or separated.
- Only 7% of the children are living with their fathers at the time of referral to TaC.
- Where a mother has more than one child, siblings are separated whilst their mother is in prison in 68% of cases.
- The mothers originate from 31 local authorities, and the TaC Social Workers have connected with 56 local authorities. Each TaC Social Worker has worked with a different

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set of local authorities, with the exception of Devon, Bridgend, and Oxfordshire (which both have worked with).

- Five mothers from HMP Eastwood Park have returned to prison post release due to re-arrest, sentencing or recall.
- There continue to be difficulties with imprisoned mothers attending virtual meetings with social services.
- Prison staff report that the nature of the trusting and supportive relationship that the TaC Social Worker builds with imprisoned mothers serves to reduce suspicion and regain trust in Social Workers in the community. This trusting and respectful relationship with the TaC Social Worker contributes to the 'healthy establishment' agenda, through respect for family relationships and helping to avoid family breakdown (<https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/our-expectations/>).
- There was an increase in the proportion of mothers who felt they could trust Children's Social Services to help their families at T2 6-month follow-up surveys compared to at the start of the intervention (42% vs 34%). Whilst mothers do feel an increased trust in children's social services after involvement with TaC, trust remains low.
- All mothers were 'very satisfied' with their TaC Social Worker in T2 follow-up surveys. The vast majority of mothers (95 %) reported feeling supported by professionals within the prison, but most (79%) reported feeling not at all or only slightly supported by professionals outside.
- The nature of the work in each prison differs with women in HMP Send having committed more serious offences and being less likely to have contact or have children live with them in the future, and thus the focus is often supporting women to manage expectations and their feeling of loss and despair, with risk management around contact playing a significant role.
- In both prisons The TaC Social Workers play a significant role in managing self-harm and risk of suicide through the ACCT process, again a focus in the healthy prison tests.
- In HMP Eastwood Park the role involves more family court work and supporting and contributing to reports regarding mothers who wish to be placed with their baby on the MBU.
- It is unfortunate that the MBU cannot undertake parenting assessments, or formally help mothers to develop their parenting skills; this would seem to be a missed opportunity.
- The TaC Social Workers are helping mothers to improve communication skills with their children through direct and indirect intervention.
- All community practitioners believed that the relationship between mother and child had improved because of the involvement of TaC. Three community practitioners reported the

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child was more settled. No one reported that the child was less settled, and everyone agreed that there had been no negative effects of the service for children.

- The role of the Social Worker is embedded into both prisons, although more work could be done in HMP Eastwood Park to link with POMS.
- The overriding view was that the TaC Social Workers should be based within the prison, although there were differing views about who should employ them, the Ministry of Justice or third sector organisation like Pact.

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## Recommendations

- Improvements still need to be made to create agreed platforms and better modes of communication between the prison and social services.
- Participants suggested publicising the service more widely within HMP Eastwood Park to increase awareness of the service. This could mean offering presentations to the different teams within the prison. The challenge with this at the current time is capacity, as the workload is significantly higher for the TaC social worker at HMP Eastwood Park in terms of complexity, the need to progress cases in shorter timescales, and more mothers with larger families and contact with children, plus a less established Pact team and a prison facing multiple challenges.
- Consideration of co-location with POMs in HMP Eastwood Park.
- Consideration given to the TaC Social Workers can support the prison at a strategic level , by sharing their knowledge and expertise more formally to enhance capacity building within the prison.
- Ensure the TaC Social Workers are consistent in accessing and recording on prison communication systems to ensure everyone is kept in the loop.
- Investigation into how the mother and baby unit could be facilitated to undertake parenting assessments which would help increase its effectiveness and occupancy.
- Extend the work of TaC with mothers on release.
- More emphasis placed on strengthening the links between women and support services in their community, so that mothers have more support once released from prison.

## Next stages of the evaluation

Over the final six months of the study concluding in December 2023, we will continue to collect data from the case tracker. We will continue to collect data via surveys from mothers, community practitioners and prison staff. We will interview one or two strategic actors to help consider future implementation. We will continue analysing the transcripts of the remaining qualitative interviews with mothers, carers and community practitioners already undertaken. We will analyse the workload diaries of the TaC social workers and conduct the literature review. We will continue to consider issues of different models of delivery and resource optimisation going forward.

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# Background

## Together a Chance

Together a Chance (TaC) is a three-year pilot project placing a Social Worker<sup>1</sup> in two women's prisons, one in HMP Eastwood Park, Gloucestershire and one in HMP Send, Surrey. The pilot is running from April 2021 to December 2023. This project is led by The Prison Advice and Care Trust (Pact), a pioneering national charity that supports prisoners, people with convictions, and their children and families. At both prisons, Pact had a pre-existing team, which included a Family Engagement Worker, and it was through their work that the need for additional support for mothers with children was identified.

### Aims of the intervention

The post of Social Worker, as part of the Pact team within the prison, is to function as an advocate for women whose children are involved with children's social care in the originating local authority. Together a Chance aims to support best practice, by working together with other agencies in the best interests of the children whilst also promoting the mother's parental rights.

***All practitioners should follow the principles of the Children Acts 1989 and 2004 - that state that the welfare of children is paramount and that they are best looked after within their families, with their parents playing a full part in their lives, unless compulsory intervention in family life is necessary.***

***(Working Together to Safeguard Children statutory guidance, 2018, p.9)***

<sup>1</sup> We refer to Social Worker (capitalised) throughout this report to denote the protected title (2008) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukSJ/2018/893/part/6/made>)

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In line with statutory guidance, the TaC Social Worker works collaboratively with the child's Social Worker and/or other key professionals in the multi-agency group and supports the mother in prison to ensure that she:

- has every opportunity to be directly involved in decision making,
- is represented at key meetings and
- is empowered to take an active part in the planning for her family's future.

The TaC Social Worker helps women held at the prison to engage successfully with other professionals and assists with family visits. The aim is for the TaC Social Worker to become part of the team around the child, alongside family members and other professionals. The TaC Social Worker is responsible for delivery of one to one and group interventions such as parenting courses, skills boosting sessions, family group conferencing and supported visits.

The TaC Social Worker also plays a part in upskilling both the Pact and wider social care workforce about mothers in prison, through liaison and training to external agencies and professionals, including local authority social care teams. The TaC Social Worker also forms relationships with support agencies in home communities to create effective referral pathways to other support where needed, including Pact Through the Gate support and welfare grants applications where appropriate. This evaluation aims to consider the added value brought to Pact by the two new TaC Social Worker roles.

The TaC Social Worker role is intended to offer direct support to 120 mothers across the three years of the study (60 per prison, 20 per year, per prison). The TaC Social Workers (usually via a weekly Pact management meeting) make early identification of those mothers in need of support and once identified will provide emotional and practical support, as well as advocacy with regards to any care proceedings and regaining custody. The mothers serving sentences typically originate from across the South of England and Wales although our data reveals that some come from further afield. Each TaC Social Worker will also be responsible for consulting with and providing some support to carers who are looking after the female prisoner's children in the community (foster or kinship carers).

HMP Eastwood Park has one existing Family Engagement Manager (FEM) employed by Pact (although this post was not filled at the time of our visit to the prison) and a Visiting Mum worker (another Visiting Mum worker is based at Styal prison). The TaC Social Worker at HMP Eastwood Park collaborates with the mother and baby unit (MBU) to support the multi-disciplinary team in making decisions in the best interests of mothers and babies placed or being considered for a place in the unit and helps advocate on behalf of the mothers within the unit. There is an existing part-time Family Engagement Worker (FEW) and team manager in HMP Send.

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## Data collection

Over this second reporting period (June 2022-April 2023) we have collected the following data:

- We have continued to 'track' cases, having now collated 115 additional case tracker documents, bringing the cumulative total to 81 cases tracked at 6-monthly intervals.
- We have visited both prison establishments. We visited HMP Eastwood Park on 8<sup>th</sup> February and HMP Send on 14<sup>th</sup> February
- We interviewed four staff whilst in HMP Eastwood Park.
- We interviewed four staff whilst in staff in HMP Send.
- We have disseminated a survey for prison staff and have received 11 replies.
- We have interviewed one of the TaC Social Workers.
- We have received a work activity diary from each worker, recording the tasks completed throughout a working week.
- We have interviewed a further three mothers in prison, and three mothers one month after release - a combined total of eight mothers in prison, and six mothers one month after release.
- We have analysed a further 15 surveys completed by mothers at T1 (the outset of the intervention) and six at T2 (six months later) - a combined total of 38 at T1 and 20 at T2.
- We have interviewed one further practitioner in the community, a combined total of seven.
- We have received a further four surveys from practitioners in the community, a combined total of nine.
- We have interviewed one child.
- We have undertaken two interviews with carers, a combined total of three.

Data collection	Year 1	Year 2	Total
Case tracker	35	46	81
Interviews mothers in prison	5	3	8
Interviews mothers released	3	3	6
Surveys from mothers	T1 23 T2 14	T1 15 T2 6	T1 38 T2 20
Interviews with each TaC Social Worker	2	1	3 with each Social Worker
Activity diaries with TaC Social Workers		2	
Interviews with community practitioners	6	1	7
Surveys from community practitioners	5	4	9
Interviews with carers	1	2	3
Interviews with children		1	1
Visits to prison		2	2
Interviews with prison staff		8	8
Surveys from prison staff		11	11

Table 1: Summary of data collected

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## Data analysis

We have reported descriptive statistics for the TaC case trackers and the surveys completed by community practitioners, prison staff and mothers engaged with the TaC service. All interviews have been recorded and professionally transcribed by an independent transcription service. We are in the process of analysing these.

## Focus of this Report

This interim report focuses on the visits to the two prisons, interviews and surveys completed by prison staff to consider how the TaC service is embedded within each prison, and the value it brings to the institution. We also focus on the cumulative case tracker data to consider the developing breadth and nature of the TaC Social Worker role. Lastly, we present survey data from community practitioners and survey data from mothers in prison.

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# Previous interim report

## Findings from first interim report

- The Social Workers have reported working with 35 women, 19 in HMP Eastwood Park, 16 in HMP Send.
- The Social Workers are acting as a conduit of information, facilitating contact between mothers and community practitioners, mothers and courts, and mothers and children.
- Relationships between local authority Social Workers and mothers are often antagonistic, fractured and sometimes non-existent.
- The Social Worker provides support to mothers in both attending meetings around their children and family court proceedings.
- The feedback from mothers and community practitioners is that the role of the Social Worker is invaluable to both groups.
- The Social Workers' support mothers for a short time post release and will continue to attend meetings with women, where this is required.
- Having a solicitor scheme in HMP Send is extremely beneficial.
- The two prisons are quite different, and thus the service offered by the Social Worker project cannot be standardised.
- There is evidence of the complexity of work which reinforces the importance of this being a qualified social worker. The roles of the Social Workers and the FEW are however complementary.
- The TaC Social Workers are building the trust of mothers by demonstrating respect and coming alongside; they are beginning to have an impact on how mothers engage with community Social Workers.
- The Social Workers are demonstrating that they can hold a 'child-focused plus' approach and are able to work for the benefit of the child and the mother, and the differing perspectives are not necessarily polarised.

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- This pilot scheme is beginning to demonstrate that mothers can, with the right support, continue to play a role in their children's lives and be involved in decisions relating to their welfare, where it is in the best interests of the children.
  - For those children where ongoing contact is not appropriate due to the nature of the mother's offence, this early data suggests that skilled support in educating and being transparent with mothers is having a positive impact on wellbeing and contributing to the child's identity through life story work.
  - Domestic abuse was a significant feature in the previous lives of mothers accessing the project. Where children are residing with fathers and there is a history of domestic abuse, there are ongoing issues around negotiating contact with children.
  - A very high percentage of siblings are separated, and this then involves more than one children's Social Worker, sometimes across different local authorities.
  - The MBU within HMP Eastwood Park is not at full capacity (between 2 and five places being occupied)

In the first interim report we identified a range of barriers to the work,

- The difference in online meeting platforms utilised by the prison service and local authority teams acts as a barrier to mothers' attendance at virtual meetings.
- Communication and negotiation with courts is difficult, often providing late notice of court dates which does not facilitate women's involvement or attendance.

We suggested a range of recommendations that the TaC pilot might consider, to develop the scheme further.

## Recommendations from first interim report

- The length of the TaC intervention is unknown and highly variable. Court proceedings ongoing are taking a year, therefore issues of case throughput with only one worker at each prison, may create the risk of having a waiting list and the Social Workers may need to consider prioritisation or some other solution.

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- Of the 35 cases, it is worth noting that only 2 cases were brought to the attention of TaC by the children's Social Worker in the community. This suggests that there is a need for awareness raising with local authorities and courts to ensure that cases in proceedings are brought to the attention of the prison.
  - Limited data has been collected on how many mothers have care experience and it would be helpful for the Social Workers to discuss this more fully with women as a means of understanding previous experiences of children's social care, and to work towards resolving issues of mistrust, and developing a positive working relationship with professionals for the benefit of their children.
  - HMP Send has access to pro-bono solicitor services, and exploration as to whether a similar scheme could be developed at HMP Eastwood Park could be considered.
  - Most community practitioners are using Microsoft Teams as a platform for online meetings, but this is not accessible from within the prison. It is difficult to know how this can be progressed other than to discuss with higher management.

### **Update on previously identified barriers and recommendations**

Since the first interim report we believe a pro-bono solicitor scheme has now been started in HMP Eastwood Park. We now have more data on how many mothers had experience of care as a child, via the tracker. The communication difficulties relating to the use of different platforms continue to be unresolved, this means that women in prison are still unable to engage fully in meetings held on the Teams virtual platform which seems to be universally preferred in children's social care. As the prison video system is not always practically possible, the only accessible mode is via speakerphone which hampers full engagement in the meeting (this was observed during our visit to HMP Eastwood Park- see later in the report).

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# Background to the two prisons

## HMP Eastwood Park

Since our first interim report, HMP Eastwood Park was inspected in October 2022, and the inspection report relayed a challenging environment. The inspectors noted

*‘Eastwood Park is a women’s prison in Gloucestershire that held 348 prisoners at the time of our inspection. Like the other closed prisons in the women’s estate, it holds a range of prisoners from those on remand to others who are serving indeterminate sentences or life’.*

The inspection identified a range of issues with the prison,

*‘In recent years, the prison had struggled to recruit and retain enough staff and at the time of our inspection a third of officer and operational support grades were not available. ....The effect of staff shortages meant that the already curtailed regime was often further restricted ‘. The inspection highlighted that rates of self-harm were very high and increasing, with two self-inflicted deaths since the last inspection.’ Many women told us they did not feel well cared for.’*

The inspection report went on to note,

*‘Eastwood Park received the lowest grade for safety and gaps in care and the lack of support for the most vulnerable and distressed women were concerning.’*

The report also identified that,

*‘Leaders had been too slow to reintroduce support to help women maintain relationships with their children, families, and significant others. The TaC scheme was however noted as one of several positive developments within the institution’*

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Welsh Gov (2023) in a written statement on 8 February 2023 noted their concerns for women from Wales and that

*‘The findings underline the importance of diverting women away from custody wherever possible. The Women’s Justice Blueprint, which was developed jointly by the Welsh Government, HMPPS and Policing in Wales, supports initiatives such as the Women’s Pathfinder diversion scheme and engagement work with magistrates to help ensure women are not faced with unnecessary and hugely disruptive prison sentences for minor offences.*

Representatives of Welsh Gov visited the prison and saw ‘the value of some of the Blueprint initiatives referenced positively in the HMIP report, including the Visiting Mum Scheme’, and the role played by the Independent Domestic Violence Advisor for Welsh women at Eastwood Park.

They concluded (Welsh Gov 2023)

*There is much more to be done to improve outcomes for women in contact with the justice system. As justice remains at present a reserved matter, we will continue in our commitment to reducing crime and reoffending to create a better Wales for all under the current system, alongside work to progress the case for the devolution of justice in Wales.*

The work of the TaC Social Worker in HMP Eastwood Park must be seen within the context and background of this negative inspection report.

## HMP Send

HMP Send is a women’s prison in Surrey that has capacity for around 200 women. HMP Send was inspected in 2021, the report was mostly positive, despite the impact of Covid 19. We note however that ‘rehabilitation and release planning’ was identified as an area in need of improvement. There are two types of specialist units at HMP Send. First, a psychologically informed planned environment (PIPE) that supports women with personality disorders and complex needs. Second, a democratic therapeutic community (DTC) that provides women with the opportunity to take part in a group-based approach to addressing mental illness, personality disorders, and drug addiction. HMP Send is the only women’s prison in England to have a DTC.

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# Findings from case tracker data

## Overview

The case tracker data provided by the TaC Social Workers gives us an indication of the demand for the Together a Chance service. It also reveals the nature of the work undertaken with the 81 mothers who are reported to have accessed support in the two prisons selected for the pilot project since it commenced in April 2021, 41 at HMP Send and 40 at HMP Eastwood Park.

Our 1<sup>st</sup> interim report, published in June 2022, reported on work with 35 mothers (19 in HMP Eastwood Park and 16 in HMP Send) from commencement of the pilot scheme to June 2022. Many of these mothers (54%) have continued to access support from TaC Social Workers, although there is a variation between the two prisons, which seems to reflect the different categories of prisons, the profiles of offenders and longevity of sentences. For example, the population of mothers engaged in the TaC service at HMP Send has tended to be more stable; in contrast, at HMP Eastwood Park there have been case closures and re-referrals mirroring women being released from prison and then returning, due to re-arrest, sentencing or recall. An overview is presented in the table below and will be discussed in more detail later in our final report.

	Report 1 cases: (April 2021 – June 2022)	Report 1 cases closed	%	Re-referrals	Closures of re-referrals	Report 1 cases remaining open at May 2023	%
HMP Send	16	7	44%	0	n/a	9	56%
HMP Eastwood Park	19	11	58%	4	2	10	53%
Total	35	18		4	2	19	54%

Table 2: Progression of Year 1 cases

TaC Social Workers have sent 115 ‘case tracker’ forms since July 2022, providing progress information relating to existing cases, as well as demographic, offence profile and assessment data relating to new cases. A further 46 new cases have been reported. Considering case closures, ongoing work with Year 1 cases and re-referrals for mothers returning to prison, the Together a Chance service is estimated to be supporting 45 mothers currently, and these ‘cases’ are almost equally divided between the two prisons selected for the pilot, as seen in the table below.

	New cases in Year 2 (July 2022 – May 2023)	Year 2 cases closed	Year 2 cases re-opened due to return to prison	Year 2 cases open at May 2023	Year 1 cases remaining open at May 2023	Total cases open at May 2023
HMP Send	25	13	0	12	9	21
HMP Eastwood Park	21	8	1	14	10	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>45</b>

Table 3: Year 2 cases

## Referral frequency

The start date for each case has been monitored to assess whether there is any pattern for new referrals across the two prisons participating in the Together a Chance pilot since it started in April 2021. Early differences can be explained by the fact the TaC Social Worker at HMP Send was previously in post as a Family Engagement Worker at the same prison, whilst the TaC Social Worker at HMP Eastwood Park was an external appointment. Similarly, the most recent period (April to June 2023) is unlikely to be a true reflection due to a lag in reporting. Since January 2022, both prisons have reported approximately 5 new referrals in each 3-month period.

	Pre-Y1	Y1 Q1	Y1 Q2	Y1 Q3	Y1 Q4	Y2 Q1	Y2 Q3	Y2 Q2	Y2 Q4	Y3 Q1	Total
EP		1	9	3	5	3	6	4	7	2	40
Send	5	3	5	2	5	6	6	6	3		41

Table 4: Intervention start date for the 81 cases

### Source of new referrals

Most referrals at both prisons have been noted as self-referrals (68% at Eastwood Park and 54% at HMP Send) and we assume that this reflects both the active way in which TaC social workers have raised awareness of the programme and word of mouth recommendations. Looking at the sources of professional referrals (see Figure 1), it is notable that a higher proportion of referrals come from the Prison Offender Managers working within the Offender Manager Unit, which is co-located at HMP Send. At HMP Send 10 referrals (24% of all referrals) have come from the OMU compared to 4 referrals (10% of all referrals) at HMP Eastwood Park. Although low in number, it is pleasing to see that 6 children's social workers (7% of all referrals) have contacted the prison and referred into the Together a Chance scheme.

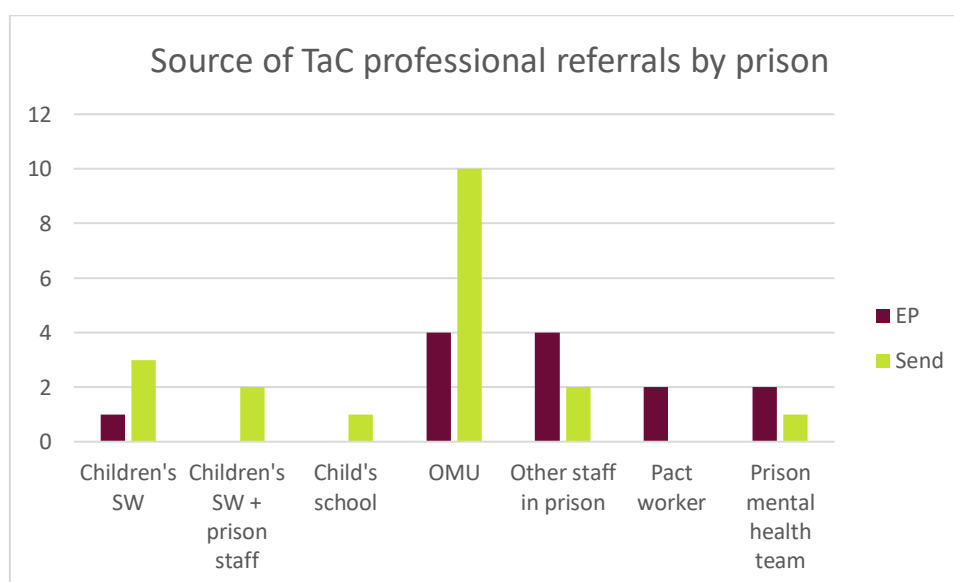


Figure 1: Source of professional referrals for 81 cases

## Updated profile of mothers

Most of the 81 women who have accessed the Together a Chance service at the two prisons participating in the pilot scheme were White British (79%), though it is worth noting that those identifying as gypsy or Irish traveller were over-represented at 5%, compared to 0.1% across the general population; and Black, Black British, Black African or Black Caribbean at 10% compared to 4% across the general population (England and Wales 2021 Census). The majority of women (58%) were aged between 30 and 39 and the age profile is broadly similar at both prisons. (See Figures 2 and 3)

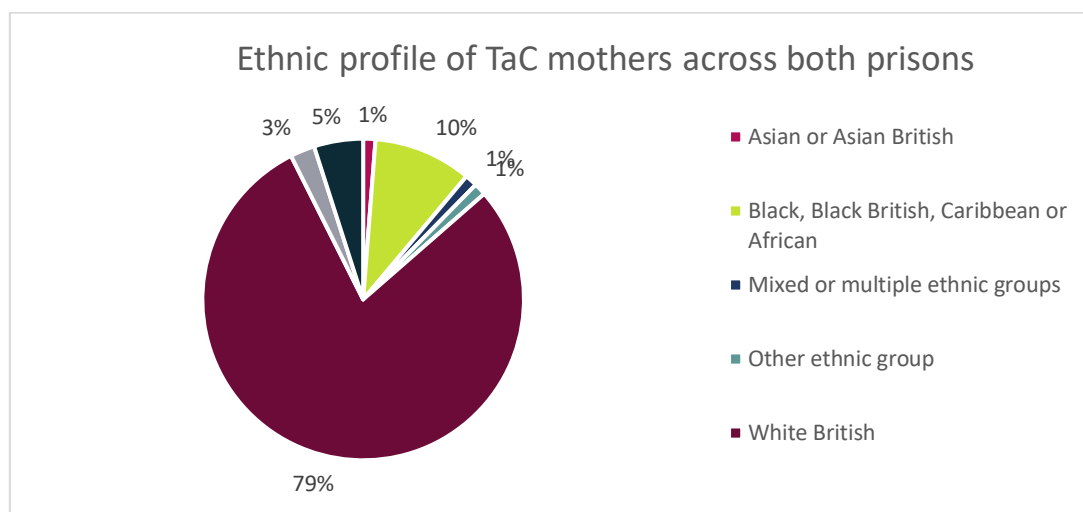


Figure 2: Ethnicity of mothers accessing the Together a Chance service

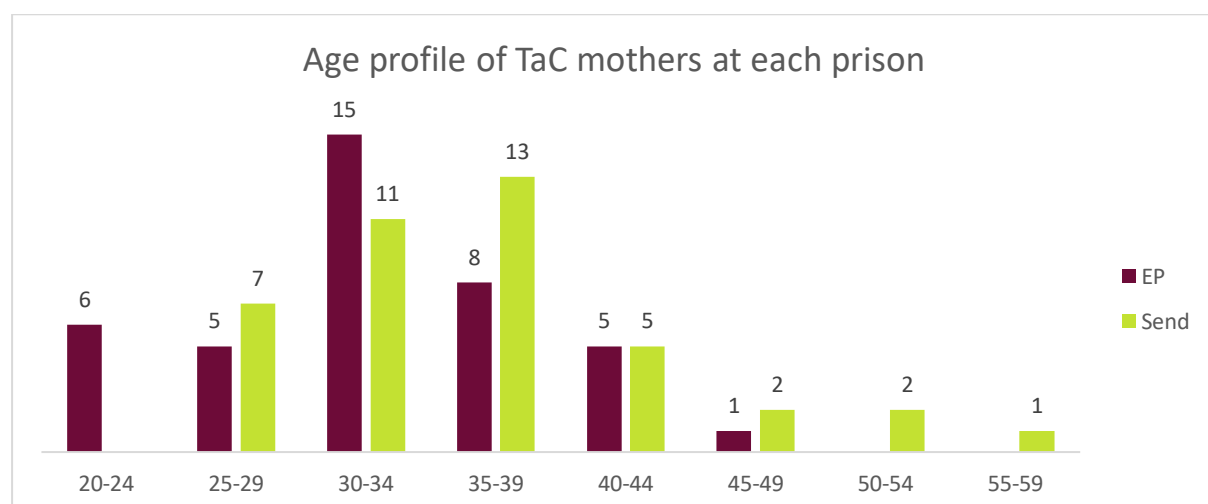


Figure 3: Age profile of mothers accessing the Together a Chance service

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## Source of referrals

Our previous report highlighted the high prevalence of women known to social services or in care as a child. Whilst there continue to be some gaps in the data, 22 mothers (27%) have so far reported being known to social services as children (see Figure 4). This is significant given the 1.15% population average found in communities across the UK (Home for Good, 2021.) Most women were single or separated (78%). It is not clear whether this statistic is consistent across the women's estate or whether demand for support is higher from mothers who are single or estranged on account of difficulties with childcare and contact arrangements whilst incarcerated. The high self-referral and engagement rate will be discussed in the next section.

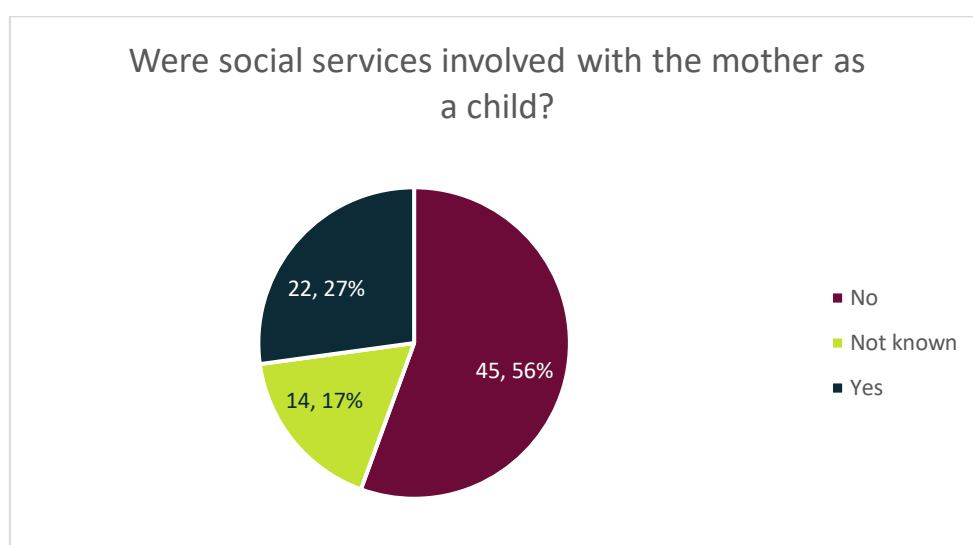


Figure 4: Mothers accessing the Together a Chance service who were in care or known to social services as a child

The geographical origin of the women continues to be diverse which naturally has implications for contact arrangements as well as the workload of the TaC Social Workers. Consistent with the access criteria for the service, almost all mothers (78 out of the 81) had at least one Social Worker allocated to their child/ren. Based on the reported local authorities for their children's Social Worker(s), mothers at HMP Send are estimated to have originated from 31 local authority areas and mothers at HMP Eastwood Park from 28 different local authority areas. Whilst the TaC Social Workers reported links with 56 different local authorities in total, they have so far had only three local authorities in common (see Figure 5, note though that the size of the wording is unrelated to number of mothers or children originating from each area). The spread of local authorities is such that the Together a Chance service has so far connected with each local authority on behalf of one or at most two mothers, with three exceptions: Devon was reported as the originating local authority for their child/ren by 6 mothers across both prisons; Oxfordshire by 5 mothers at Eastwood Park; and Bridgend by 3 mothers across both prisons.



Figure 5: Local authorities responsible for the children of TaC mothers at HMP Send and HMP Eastwood Park

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## Updated sentencing profile of mothers

### Offence profile

The tracker data reports each mother's offence, and this has been categorised and amalgamated across both prisons to protect anonymity (see Figure 6).

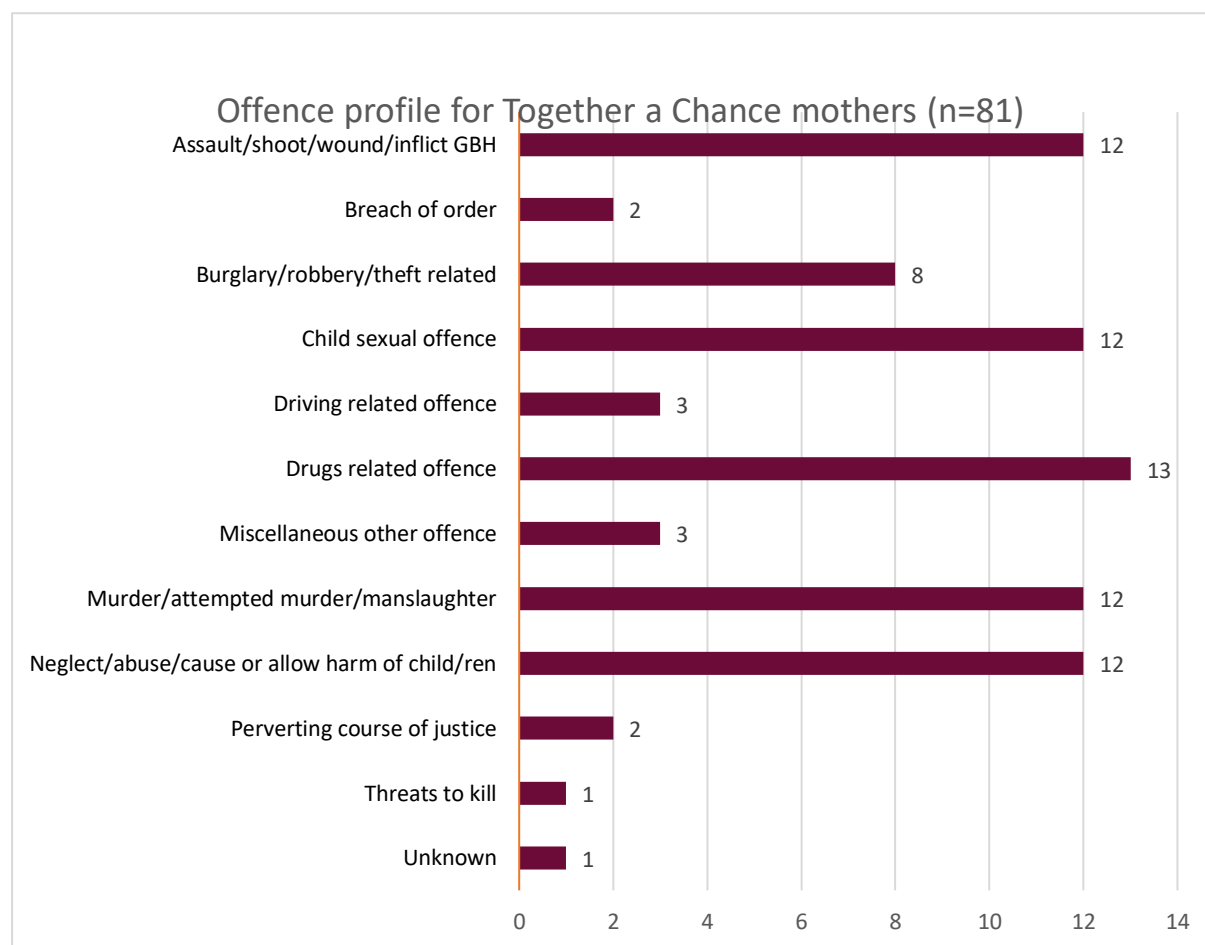


Figure 6: Offence profile for TaC mothers

## Length of sentence

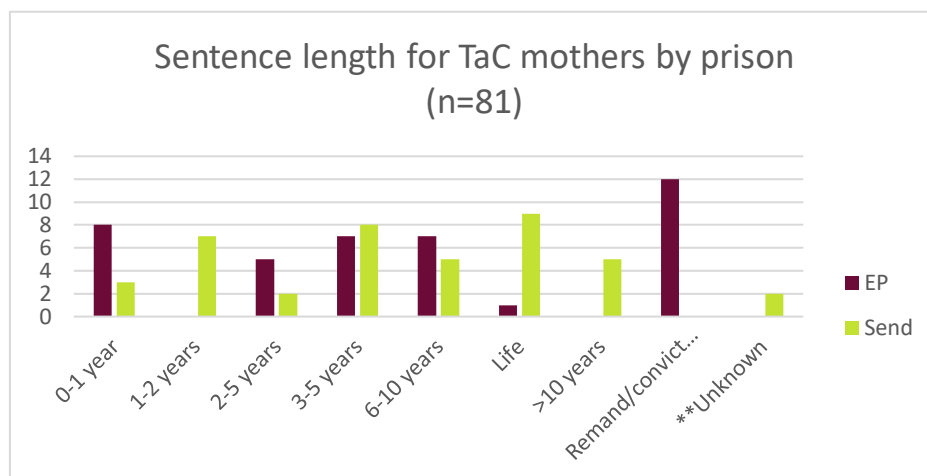


Figure 7: Length of sentence for TaC mothers

## Child-related offences

We have specifically analysed offences that have resulted in harm to children as this has implications for the outcome of any assessments in relation to contact and care of children. With an increased number of cases, it has become apparent that a greater proportion of cases at HMP Send (51%) relate to mothers that have committed offences which have caused harm to their own or other children, compared to Eastwood Park (22%), as shown in Figure 8.

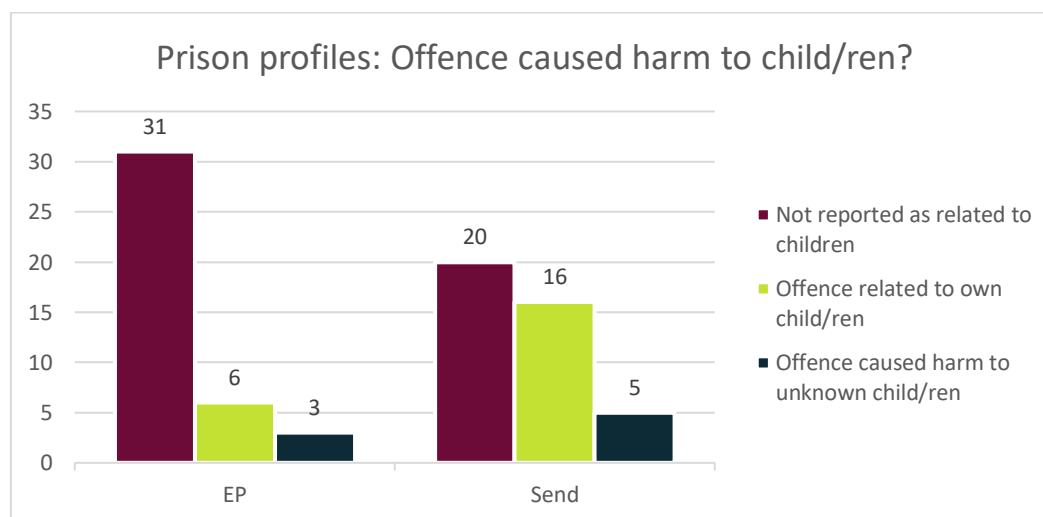


Figure 8: Child-related offences by prison for TaC mothers

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## Updated family profiles

We have continued to collect data relating to the family size of each mother at the point of referral to the Together a Chance service.

### Number of children

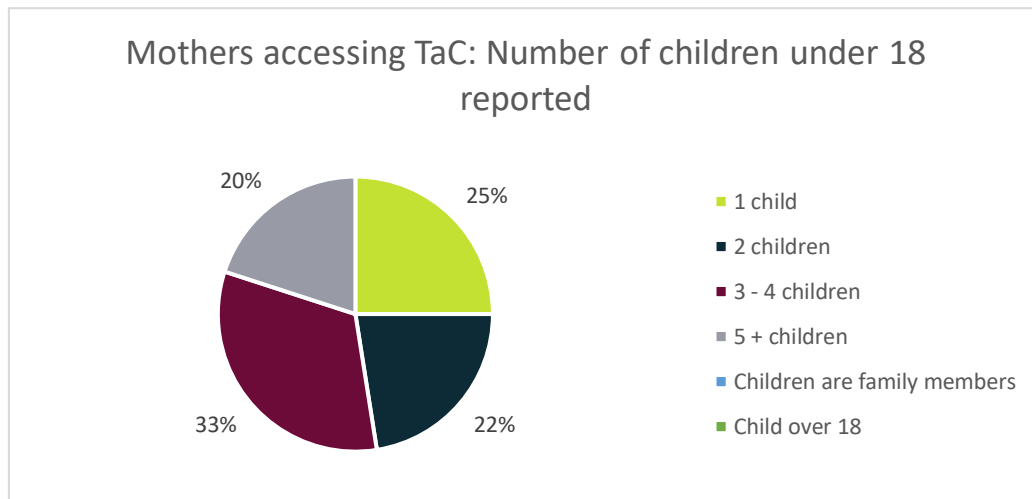


Figure 9: Number of children reported by each TaC mother

### Age of children

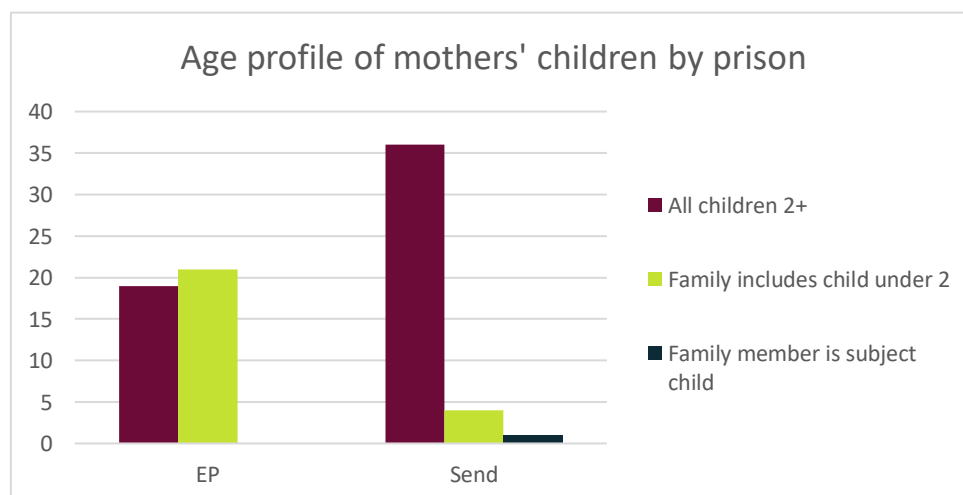


Figure 10: Children's ages for TaC mothers by prison

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## Care arrangements for the mother's children

We have continued to record the care arrangements for the children of mothers at the point of referral to the Together a Chance service. Less than half the mothers (44%) had all their children living in a family or kinship care arrangement during their incarceration, whether arranged privately or following local authority intervention, and of these only 11 lived with their father or step-father. For 14 mothers (17%), at least one child had been or was being placed for adoption, resulting in the loss of parental responsibility.

Of the 56 mothers with more than one child, the majority (68%) of siblings continue to be separated, either amongst family members; in different foster care placements; in a mixed arrangement including family and foster care; or a mixed arrangement including adoption.

## Arrangements at referral

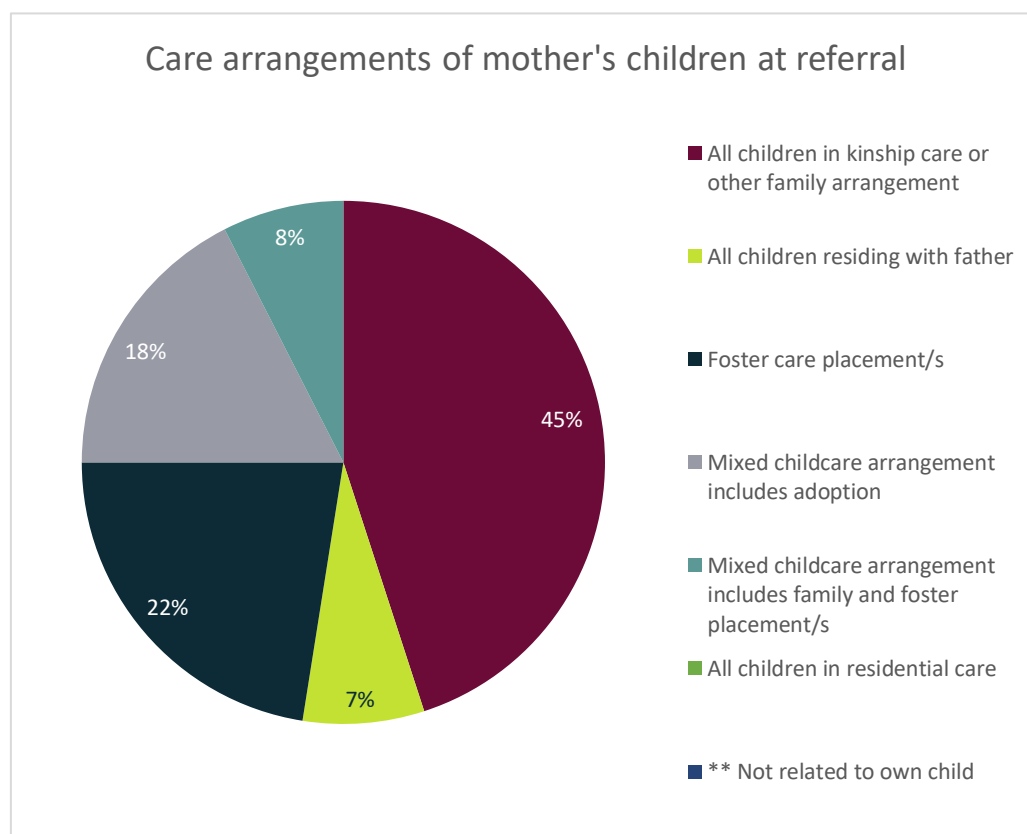


Figure 11: Care arrangements in place for the children of TaC mothers at the point of referral

## Childcare arrangements

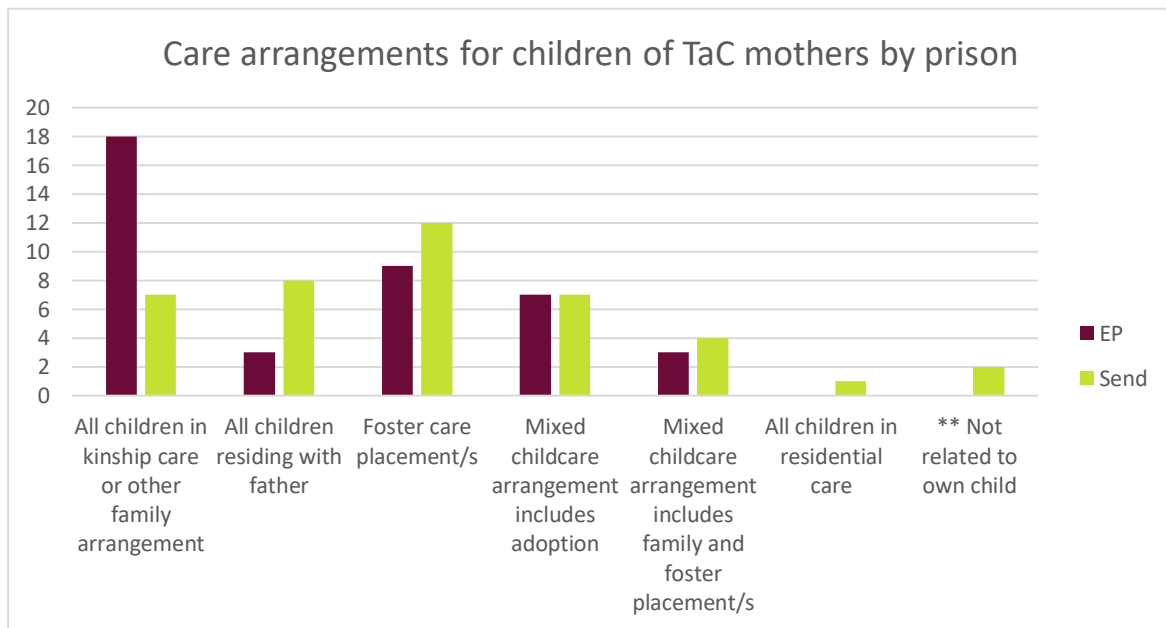


Figure 12: Care arrangements by prison

## Sibling separation

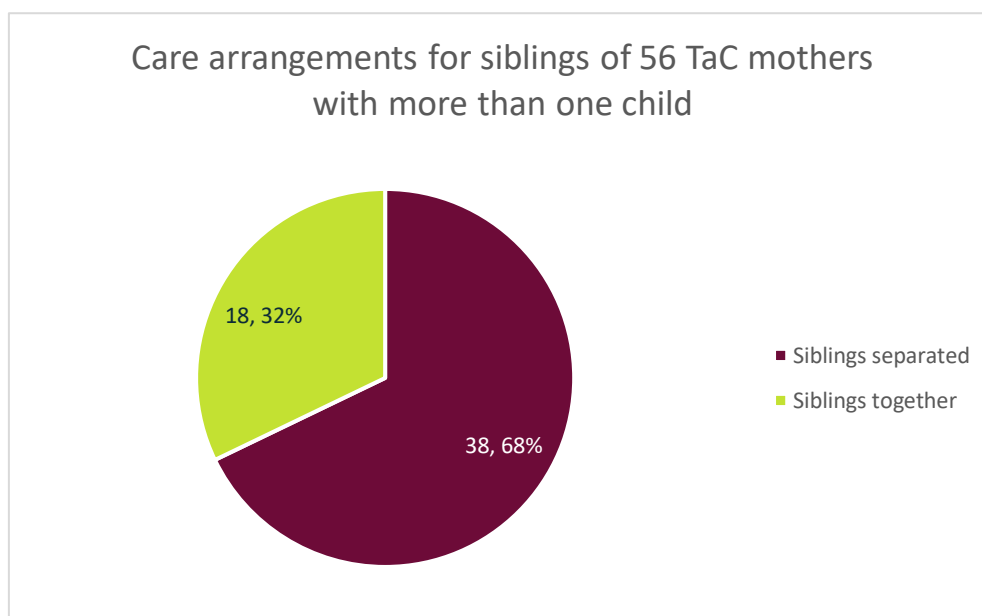


Figure 13: Sibling arrangements for TaC mothers with more than one child

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## Mother and Baby Unit at HMP Eastwood Park

Our tracker data at the point of referral indicates that 25 mothers had a child that was either unborn or under two, 21 of whom were at HMP Eastwood Park. Yet at the point of referral, only two women reported being on the MBU and we have therefore explored this further. Data from new cases and follow-up reports suggests that placement on the MBU has been identified in the initial needs assessment for five other women. This sample size is too small for any meaningful analysis though we do know that two applications supported by the TaC Social Worker were successful, one was pending at the most recent report, one application was progressed but was not needed due to release, and the other was still being explored in collaboration with prison staff and the originating local authority children's social care department at the time of the most recent report.

## Case complexity

### Number of social workers per 'case'

As reported previously, 88% of mothers accessing Together a Chance have at least one social worker.

### Family Court involvement

Many of the mothers accessing the Together a Chance programme are, or have been, party to proceedings or are seeking assistance with making an application to the Family Court, separate from their criminal trial. Across both prisons, 64 mothers (79%) are either currently or have been party to proceedings. Most of these cases (59) related to proceedings instigated by the local authority proceedings, in relation to acquiring Parental Responsibility and leading on the care arrangements for at least one child. For the remaining five mothers, contact was being restricted by a family member and they were seeking support from the TaC Social Worker to make an application for contact or breach of an existing order.

The care proceedings data highlights a difference between the prisons in the mother's stage of progression in relation to care arrangements for her child/ren, and this has implications for TaC Social Worker workload (see Figure 14). The majority of mothers at HMP Send reported that care proceedings were completed on referral to the pilot scheme, and only 10 cases (24%) required support with legal proceedings in the Family Court. In contrast, at HMP Eastwood Park, 28 cases (70%) were currently in proceedings or were seeking support with applications for contact at the time of referral.

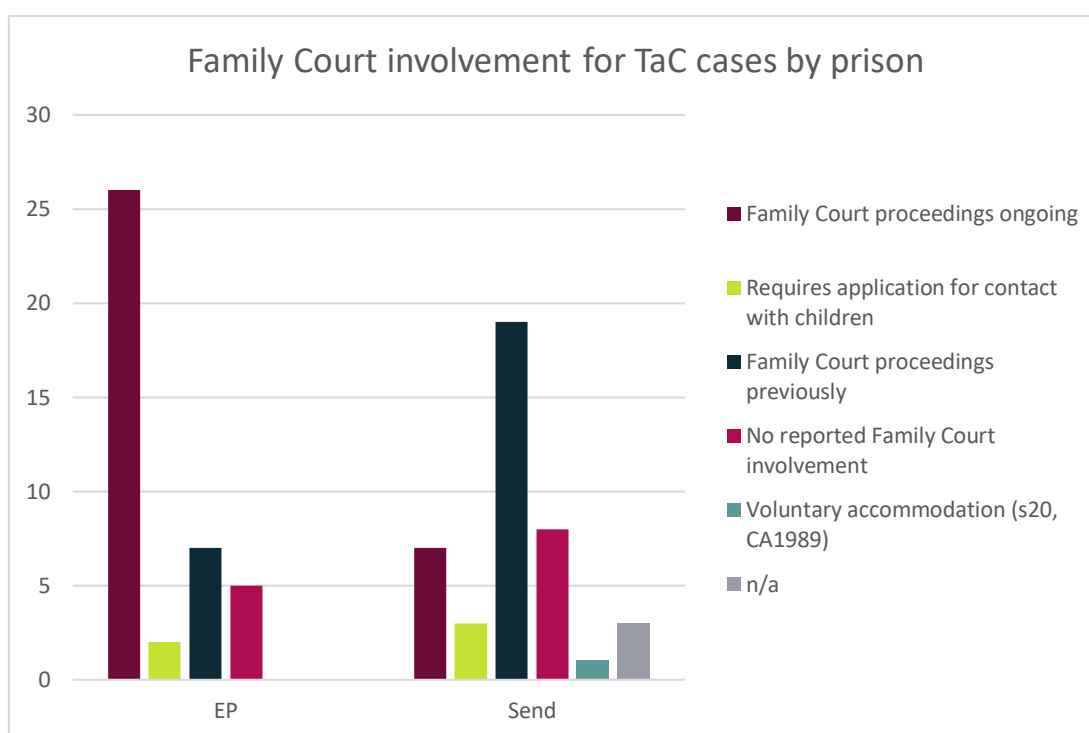


Figure 14: Prison profile of TaC mothers' involvement in proceedings in the Family Court

### Self-identified needs of mothers

With the exception of requesting support to access a place on the Mother and Baby Unit which came from mothers at HMP Eastwood Park only, self-identified needs were consistent across the groups of mothers at both prisons (see Table 5). The most common request for support was with improving the level or quality of contact with children (both direct and indirect) and this was requested by 56 women (69%). Across both groups, 41% requested support to improve communication with their child's social worker. Consistent with the reported numbers in family court proceedings, support to navigate the Family Court was a request from 13 women at Eastwood Park (33%) and only 4 women at HMP Send (10%).

	HMP Eastwood Park	HMP Send	Total
Improved relationship and/or contact with children	29	27	56
Improved communication with CSC	14	19	33
Support to navigate Family Court	13	4	17
<b>Adoption transition support</b>	9	5	14
Understand rights and likely outcome re children	6	6	12
Pre-release support	7	4	11
Support to avoid family breakdown	6	2	8
Support to have a place on MBU with child	5		5
Raising safeguarding concerns about child's care	1	1	2

Table 5: Self-identified needs of mothers

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## Access and engagement with the service

### Complexities associated with HMP Eastwood Park

At Eastwood Park, there have been five returning mothers (12.5%) that were re-opened following closure – in these cases, the mothers re-enter the prison in the New Admissions Unit. The reported reasons for ‘return’ cases re-opening are:

- recall due to breach of license conditions
- following sentencing having been initially remanded and then bailed
- being re-arrested following an initial remand and bail cycle.

All five mothers self-referred back into the Together a Chance service. The process of release preparation, and then re-referral increases the workload for the TaC Social Worker and the case data highlights the need for knowledge and expertise when a mother is unexpectedly returned to prison, for example, in challenging voluntary care arrangements for children when a mother did not fully comprehend what she was being asked to sign and withdrawing consent to foster care. The return to prison may also suggest the need for more support and follow up post release.

### Complexities associated with HMP Send

The case data reveals the offence and sentencing profile of mothers based at HMP Send can create challenges for contact with their children. In particular, the narrative evidence provided highlighted the complexity of navigating Public Protection policies and this was more common at HMP Send.

### Intervention challenges

We have started to collect data on challenges reported by the TaC Social Workers, either during the intervention or on case closure. The tracker reports indicate that at least 13 of the 81 mothers supported have been in an ACCT process and that the TaC Social Worker has supported this through the multi-disciplinary team within the prison. We have also noted the high incidence of self-reports of domestic abuse in interviews with mothers; our tracker data notes that in 12 cases (15%) ongoing issues with domestic abuse is highlighted, most frequently in relation to an ex-partner restricting contact.

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## Early outcomes on closed cases

Initial analysis on the 35 closed cases gives us an indication of the work undertaken and the impact it has had on the mothers who have volunteered for support from the Together a Chance scheme. The most commonly reported benefit by the TaC Social Workers is the support they gave to facilitate a relationship with their child/ren's social worker in the originating local authority. Support with the legal process was identified for 14 mothers at Eastwood Park and eight mothers at HMP Send. Conversely, acting as a conduit for child updates to the mother was identified for 13 mothers at HMP Send and eight mothers at HMP Eastwood Park; this is consistent with the different stages of care proceedings and the higher level of contact restrictions in place for mothers at HMP Send. TaC Social Workers also cited that their involvement improved contact with children in prison in 21 cases and mentoring and contact with children on release in 21 cases (see Table 6).

	EP	Send	Total
Facilitated relationship with LA social worker	12	12	24
Support with legal process	14	8	22
Acted as conduit for child updates to mother	8	13	21
Arranged mentoring/support and/or contact on release	13	8	21
Improved contact with children	10	11	21
Written or verbal advocacy	11	7	18
Support with child-related issues	5	3	8
Facilitate family liaison	6	2	8
Contributed to parenting/risk assessments	5	2	7

Contributed to parenting/risk assessments	5	2	7
Supported child/ren's life story contribution	5	1	6

Table 6: Outcomes of 35 closed cases based on thematic analysis of TaC social worker reports

Aspects hampering the intervention were also identified by the TaC social workers and are reported as tentative findings for the 35 closed cases to date. The most commonly reported 'barrier', reported in 9 cases, was difficulty in liaising effectively with the Local Authority social care team, either due to difficulty in maintaining consistent and regular contact with the community-based social worker for the child or getting clarity or 'engagement' from the local authority relating to their plans or assessments. The TaC Social Workers also both noted challenges in achieving intervention goals during a short-stay incarceration or due to an unexpected plan change, for example when a mother is released unexpectedly or transferred to another establishment at short notice. In a small number of cases, the TaC social workers also reported on challenges advocating for mothers in the best interests of their children when other prison personnel or the policies (e.g. Public Protection restrictions) have a fixed viewpoint which appears to be at odds with the healthy prison tests. Physical barriers, for example, the lack of a consistent medium for online meetings, the video link not being available or working, and the unavailability of a suitable space for family friendly contact or post-release accommodation were also reported by both TaC social workers (see Table 7)

	EP	Send	Total
Challenge in achieving accessing LA SW	4	5	9
High intensity work required in short prison stay	4	2	6
Different perspective from prison staff presents challenge in achieving goals	3	1	4
Unexpected prison transfer to another estate	2	2	4

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Complexity of Public Protection policies	1	2	3
Barrier to virtual meetings in prison		2	2
Wider family lack of engagement	1	1	2
Family court timescales	1	1	2
Video link not working/available	1		1
Lack of suitable space for relaxed family visits	1		1
Lack of suitable family-friendly accommodation on release	1		1

Table 7: Barriers identified by TaC social workers on 35 closed cases

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# Visits to both prisons

We have visited both prison establishments, we visited HMP Eastwood Park on 8<sup>th</sup> February, and HMP Send on 14<sup>th</sup> February.

The TaC Social Workers in HMP Eastwood Park were based in a room with another third sector provider, being situated at some distance from the Prison Offender Managers (POMs). Many of the women were locked down because of staff shortages. Whilst in Eastwood Park we interviewed four members of staff, a Governor with responsibility for women's health, perinatal care and safeguarding, a perinatal worker, a prison offender manager (POM -prison) and a member of staff from the Visiting Mum scheme. We also observed the Pact Social Worker and a mother participating in a Team around the Child meeting hosted by a child's school. The posts family engagement manager (FEM) was vacant at the time of our visit and there was no family engagement worker (FEW) in post.

Whilst in HMP Send we held semi-structured interviews with a manager with responsibility for public protection, a family engagement worker (FEW), a POM (prison). We also visited the wing staff and held an informal interview with a Senior Officer. During the lunchtime lockdown, we toured the prison and were able to informally interview a professional in the Therapeutic Community and met mothers who had accessed TaC on the wings.

## Findings from interviews with prison staff

### Value of the role

Staff recognised the difficulties mothers faced when entering prison and the difficulties in contacting and finding out information about their children,

*I think they're so disempowered and they're so out of control and, you know, they're finding out that things are going on in their kids' lives and they don't... they can't just pick up the phone to sort that out, they need people to advocate for them... yeah, I very much feel that {she} will come in and she's really knowledgeable. (Perinatal worker)*

All staff interviewed saw great value in the TaC Social Worker role, and those new to their position found it difficult to believe that this was a pilot project.

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*And I was incredulous about that because the work that she does here is - has such an impact that I couldn't understand how this isn't already - I mean, her work is exemplary.... it just beggars' belief that it's not already rolled out and everybody has this opportunity. (POM)*

*I don't think I realised when I started here that it was not a trial but like a bit of a period, but I think the thought of that support not being here for women is quite a daunting thing for them because they will just think, 'Who can I go to that actually knows what's going on?' and I think because they, like, invest so much time in obviously coming to these meetings with her and sharing all their family information with her, it is a trusted person they've got within the prison and being that social worker, it's just a massive help to them. (OMU)*

The perinatal staff member notes how the TaC Social Worker could help advise and build trust with mothers, because of the time and care taken in nurturing the relationship. Similarly, others highlighted the importance of building rapport to support mothers, and ensuring they are aware of their rights,

*I think {she} really, really fights for these women...but I really feel she goes in and she's very clear on what their rights are and how they need to be supported, and she's... kind of understands she's got to build that rapport with them, she's got to build that relationship with them because, like I say, she comes in as a social worker. (Perinatal worker)*

Others noted that not having the TaC Social Worker role could lead to more distress for mothers, potentially more self-harm and may also have a longer-term impact of breakdown of the family unit,

*I think if we didn't have that, then the repercussions would be that we would have more self-harm. We would have less engagement from women who were worried about their family, their children. It would cause more problems on the wings, with wing staff managing women who were in that situation. ....And ultimately, further down the line, it would cause a breakdown in the family unit, which would far exceed the period of time that they're in custody for. So, yeah. It's absolutely essential, in my opinion. (POM)*

*And if that distress is... that reduced stress is coming because they have some kind of support... {mothers} feel they have some kind of control or knowledge or understanding of what's happening with their other children, then that's {really helpful}. (Perinatal worker)*

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## Communication, information sharing and go-between

Prison staff identified that one of the major roles played by the TaC Social Worker is sharing difficult information with mothers,

*I think, especially with her background, she can give, and I've seen her do it, quite... not blunt. Being honest with people. Not saying, 'I'm sure it'll be okay, it'll work itself out', and just say realistically, 'This is unlikely to happen', or 'We'll try'. You know, I've seen her do that a few times. Which, long-term, is much, much, much better for everybody concerned. There's no point... (Governor)*

This honesty was seen as vital as a FEW told us 'Because we don't want to give them {mothers} false hope', only to be dashed later. The TaC Social Workers have been involved in final meetings with children prior to adoption, and have played a role in ensuring both that these meetings happen, and are handled sensitively, identifying issues of increased distress and risk to the mother,

*Like, and we both worked together in putting it to the prison staff, the impact it would potentially have on this mum if she wasn't to have her final contact which feels really... we understand that effect, Becky... we understand that really well, but sometimes other people don't kind of see the long-term potential of on that... on mum and the child. So, that... yeah, so we... so around risk assessment. (Perinatal worker)*

Here we can see the TaC Social Worker working jointly with the perinatal worker to facilitate the meeting as sensitively as possible. The types of open and frank conversations that the TaC Social Workers have with mothers about their children can be distressing, and passing on information to other staff about distress and risk was seen as vital,

*I think that's a big focus that we're pushing now is kind of keeping all staff in the loop. I'm... we're quite lucky here in the sense that the prison staff, the operation staff, they want to help these women, they want to know what's going on; so, if for example, we've delivered bad news, we'll ensure that the prison knows. (FEW)*

*But if we'd met with a woman and we thought she was at risk of self-harming or we thought she was really emotional and someone should be aware of it, we would either get someone to radio Oscar 1 and get them to call us. (FEW)*

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This aligns with HMPPS healthy prison test increasing safety by reducing incidents of self-harm and respecting family relationships.

*{She} is able to kind of relay that to the women and because she meets with them and they trust her, like she's kind of got that relationship with them to be able to make them understand it from our point of view. (OMU manager)*

Again, we see how the time invested by the TaC Social Worker helps to build a more trusting relationship and they also helpfully explain and convey the perspectives of prison staff as a 'go between'. Some difficulties were mentioned in communicating and updating the POMs in Eastwood Park,

*Like, I think there needs to be more people doing the role because, if I'm honest with you, I think communication is quite poor...it would be nice to get like updates if they speak to one of our caseloads...But I probably think they agree that there's a lack of communication, probably... But that's an issue with the whole prison, to be honest. (POM)*

## **Communication barriers**

When we observed the TaC Social Worker and a mother participating in a Team around the Child (TAC) meeting (whilst visiting HMP Eastwood Park) hosted by a child's school, there were numerous communication difficulties. The barrier with the video system reported in the first interim report was observed. The prison video system was unavailable, and the Pact Social Worker carried her office phone with her to the wing. Staff on the wing seemed unaware of the planned meeting and there was some uncertainty and delay in agreement for the women to be unlocked from her room during further regime restriction attributed to short-staffing. The meeting had therefore started when the mother and TaC Social Worker were able to dial in. There was a sound issue when the phone was on speaker phone, and we observed the Pact Social Worker and mother taking it in turns to hold the phone to an ear. These are not ideal circumstances to facilitate or enhance a mother's participation in meetings about her children.

## **Expertise and professional knowledge**

All staff interviewed in both prisons saw the importance of the Social Worker role within the prison, noting that no-one else in the institution had their particular knowledge base or skill set. All eight interviewees felt that the TaC worker needed to be a qualified Social Worker and saw this as a seam of expertise otherwise missing from the institution. Mindful that the TaC social worker acted as the gatekeeper for the staff interviews, we purposefully sought detailed accounts of co-working experiences. All the staff interviewed reported that they had sought out the TaC Social Worker for

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advice on matters to do with mothers and their rights, and regularly drew upon their expertise, including issues on safeguarding,

*because if I've got any questions about anything, the way children's services might work or you know, how they assess things, she will come and help me with that and that's massive. (OMU manager)*

*I know... you know, if I have a woman that comes in, and I pick up doing the BCST, which is the interview that we do when they first come in, that she's got children, she's like asking questions like, 'How am I going to see them?' Or 'What support am I going to get?' Or, 'What's going to happen?' Straight away I'll email {her}. (POM)*

Similarly, the FEWs felt that it helped them in their role, as they often just learnt on the job,

*It's made a massive difference because I guess to be kind of in this role (FEW) you don't have to have any social work qualifications, anything like that, so you learn on the job essentially.*

None of the staff we spoke to felt they had a knowledge of children's social services and their procedures regarding child protection,

*but that's kind of as far as it goes for staff because they might have spoken to a social worker but they don't know the, including me, they don't know the processes and the ins and outs and how things, how it works in foster care, how the adoption process works and obviously Katia has that knowledge from when she did the role in the community, so that's made a massive difference. (FEW)*

*I think without her they'd be quite lost if I'm honest... I think as well as the prisoners the staff really like to rely on her. (OMU manager)*

Even for POMs (probation) they have had basic safeguarding training, but still did not feel they had the detailed, requisite knowledge,

*I have a quite basic understanding of child safeguarding because I've been trained in that. But the actual mechanics of child safeguarding that are done by outside services, I don't have an awful lot of knowledge. So, it complements me when I've got a prisoner who is in front of me crying her eyes out saying, 'I can't see my children', that I've got somebody that I can go to that can answer the questions that are specific to her. Or find those answers for*

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*her where I would struggle, and it would take a considerable amount of my time to actually locate that information. (POM)*

There was some question about whether the probation POMs might have more knowledge (we did not interview any probation POMs),

*I don't think the POMs are qualified to pick it up, and I don't think - maybe the probation ones, but not the prison-employed ones. We don't - we're quite new, and I don't think we would have the experience or expertise to pick up what (she) does. And I 100% think it's needed. I don't think we'd have the expertise, and I don't think we'd have the time to do the amount of work that she does. (POM)*

Staff noted that locating information from social services was time consuming, and they were not always able to secure it,

*And due to us not being trained with children's services, that work would be a lot more difficult and a lot more cumbersome, and we may not always get the right information, although we would try very hard to do so. (POM)*

Even those who worked in allied professions noted the lack of Social Work knowledge,

*PNBLOs, like the pregnancy mother and baby liaison officers, they actually don't have that kind of knowledge. (Perinatal worker)*

The TaC Social Worker was seen to bridge the gap between the prison and local authority social services,

*I think it really fills the gap of being that step between outside children's services and inside. (OMU manager)*

TaC Social Workers were able to understand and explain the childcare processes and proceedings of core group meetings to other staff, and explain prison procedures to those professionals outside,

*And so, she's good because obviously she can relay it in social worker terms to outside but then change it around prison terms. (OMU manager)*

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Social Work uses a lot of discipline specific terms, including numerous acronyms such as CIN (Child in Need) and LAC (Looked after Child); the prison Social Workers were also able to translate and explain some of the language and terminology of social work to prison staff,

*For example, she has explained what 'twin tracking means', I didn't know that before. (FEW)*

## **Qualified Social Worker**

We drilled down further in our interviews to ask whether the TaC worker needed to Social Work qualified and all interviewed felt this should be the case. Being a qualified social worker inculcated trust in the mothers,

*And it's just I think being there, they welcome having that social worker, qualified person, because then they believe that she knows what the process is rather than us just blindly saying, 'Oh, this could happen. This might not.' (OMU manager)*

The OMU manager felt that the TaC Social Worker could help explain to mothers why social services did things and understand their approach,

*I think it really helps in fact because I think the women kind of really respect what she says and her knowledge on that because, you know, I think being a social worker sometimes they have a negative view of children's service and such and social workers on the outside, so I think (she) being a social worker in here kind of she can give them their point of view on it and where they're coming from and it helps them understand a bit better. (OMU manager)*

There was also a view that local authority social workers would be more collaborative with another social worker, and could persist in seeking them out,

*I think children's services see that she's a social worker and they kind of respect that... But actually you can't really chase a social worker perhaps unless you are a social worker. (OMU manager)*

Many of the prison staff noted how many of the mothers have a negative relationship with social services, and believed the TaC Social Worker could help rebuild these, which is helpful, particularly on release,

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*I really like the side of her role that she's a social worker, and a lot of our women have really difficult relationships with the social workers, and I think that can really help, and rebuild and repair that kind of relationship that I think bodes well for when women then link up with new social workers, or they... they go out when they're released. (Perinatal worker)*

This was particularly important towards the end of sentence,

*because this woman had a really negative relationship with social services; she didn't trust them, she didn't like them, and I was struggling to kind of make her understand, you know, their thought process, why they're doing what they're doing, so {TaC Social Worker}... especially towards the end, just before her release, because obviously she was going to have to go on and do this by herself, {she} came and sat in a couple of appointments and explained her side of things, why social services is, you know, doing what they're doing, and she sat in a few social services appointments.... So, that was really helpful because it's almost like a different perspective. (FEW)*

It is helpful for mothers to understand that processes are the same for everyone in their situation,

*I think once she understood that actually it wasn't just her and actually, you know, the processes that were in place for every mum that's got kids under social services, I think that did kind of potentially make her feel a bit better about things. (FEW)*

Understanding more about social services processes, and building a relationship with the TaC Social Worker helped mothers feel more confident when working with community Social Workers on release. Prison staff described how they utilised the positive relationship to effect change in the attitudes of mothers,

*{I said to the mother} you've had a good relationship with {TaC Social Worker}. She's done what she said she was going to do. You know, why can't you give people in the community a chance as well?' And she was actually a little bit happier. But - or she stated to me she was happier to actually be released and work with children's services. (POM)*

In addition, The TaC Social Workers have developed resources to assist local authority Social Workers in working with both mothers in prison and their children,

*I know {they} have made quite a few resources to help ATP staff and also to help educate social services about prisons. FEW*

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In particular, we have had sight of a resource for Social Workers to explain to children what the prison environment is like and something of their mother's daily routines.

## Prison based role

Staff felt that it was important that the role is based in the prison as it helped them understand the barriers mothers were facing,

*that knowledge of how it works in the kind of wider system as well as being for the women, just really, she's here, she gets prison, she understands prison; you quite often may have, you know, other clinicians on the outside that don't quite understand and don't quite understand that just because a mum is in prison it doesn't mean to say she can't be at these meetings. (POM)*

Being based in prison ensured the TaC Social Worker understood the prison institution, its requirements and restrictions, and could therefore be a conduit and moderating force between the prison and community agencies. Being based in prison also meant that the Social Workers could access prison recording systems, which was seen as vital for keeping people in the loop,

*Every interaction that an officer has with a prisoner is put on DPS so we would usually just read through it before we met with someone to find out what's been on... (FEW)*

*NOMIS has helped, because my gang put a lot of things on NOMIS; and {she's} looking on NOMIS now which is really good, so she knows what has been dealt with and what hasn't. (OMU manager)*

It is important to remember that communication systems are different in private prisons, and this would need to be factored in, if rolling out the Social Worker role across all institutions,

*we're quite fortunate in the public sector in that we have one system, which is called DPS. Digital Prison System....Other prisons that are in the private sector such as Bronzefield, they do have two separate systems. (POM)*

It was noted that Social Workers in the community rarely initiated or set up meetings with mothers, as not being based in the prison perhaps makes mothers more 'out of sight and out of mind', and it is more difficult to arrange from the outside. In the main, this was done by the Social Worker based in the prison,

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*not a lot of social workers go through our case admins to set up video link or anything like that. It's all mostly through TaC. (OMU manager)*

Along with the benefits of being based in the prison, there were varied views about who should employ the Social Workers, as it was also noted that not being part of the prison establishment could be helpful and aid the TaC Social Worker's control over her work,

*But I like the fact, and I'm not sure whether {she} feels the same way, that she is outside of the... shall we say chain of command? And I think if you mix the - if you changed it to a Prison Service direction, it might take away some of the control that {she} has over her work. (POM)*

Whereas others felt that they should be employed by the Ministry of Justice,

*But she shouldn't be doing the role for children's services. Really, you know, going forward or the Ministry of Justice or, you know, but that would be the route. (Governor)*

### **Duplication of the role in prison**

We asked all staff interviewed about duplication of the new role and where they thought this happened, there were varied responses to this,

*Sometimes in terms of like what the POMs are doing because, for example, we've got the childcare resettlement license so they could go out on that temporary release to go and see their children. They'll often talk to {her} if they want to pursue that and {she} will go and relay that to the POMs and then they'll work together to kind of get the evidence. (OMU manager)*

It would seem that some aspects of the POM role overlap but this can lead to collaborative working. Others felt the role was clearly stand alone.

*I think it is a standalone... it is - it... it doesn't duplicate work that's done with the therapeutic community, it doesn't duplicate work that is done with (us). It is an essential piece of work that is done on its own, and it is (clear) where responsibility for that piece of work lies. (POM)*

There were some difficulties when a new role was introduced within the mother and baby unit in Eastwood Park,

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*Yeah, so, it hasn't all been plain sailing. I've got PMBLO officers. They're Pregnancy and Mother and Baby Liaison Officers. So, they've repeated work sometimes, which is never a positive thing. And also, because they're coming from two different approaches, sometimes messages have got a little bit blurred. And we've had to deal with a couple of occasions like that. (Governor)*

Thus, we can see where roles overlap, or new roles are introduced, clear communication is required to ensure that work is not duplicated.

## Publicity

Not surprisingly staff did not seem as aware of the Together a Chance programme in HMP Eastwood Park, this was especially the case among the POMs.

*And I think if we made the prisoners and staff a little bit more aware of what TaC can offer, she'll certainly get more referrals, she'll get more conversations; it's like with the Prison Offender Managers; they'd, I think, worked with her a bit more perhaps if they knew a bit more about what role she does. She's busy enough, I'm not saying she's not... with all the different units that she could pop along to and say hello, just explain who she is and what she does. Because you got so many different agencies, you're not sure where to go to so you don't go to anybody. (Governor)*

Similarly, the POM interviewed in Eastwood Park seemed to know less about the scheme and felt that more advertising might help,

*Might just help people know it was there, and then I guess there'd be more signposting but then she'd be more under pressure. (POM)*

In HMP Send Pact staff had made a concerted effort to put posters and leaflets all around the prison which we saw on numerous notice boards during our visit. The Pact staff in Send have also managed to attend morning staff meetings to talk about the work of TaC,

*so we've done posters which are on every single wing, we went to the staff morning meeting, so... because obviously one of the main issues is staff didn't – at the start – know who we were, so when the women were coming to them, they didn't know where to refer them to, so we made a point of kind of focusing on the staffing and raising our profile with staff, so we did a morning meeting with them; there's a weekly bulletin that goes out to all*

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*staff, and we were in that for several months, just the poster; we've got posters in the visit centre. (FEW)*

The Pact staff in HMP Send also focussed on letting staff know about the different roles of the FEW and the TaC Social Worker,

*It was quite slow because no-one really knew about PACT as a whole, they definitely didn't know the difference between our roles, so that's a big thing we focused on as we made posters with a little kind of brief about how our roles differ. (FEW)*

It seemed that the role of the TaC Social Worker was more widely understood within the smaller institution of HMP Send,

*Very well respected, very well-known, very well integrated into our working systems. With the prisoners that she's working with, yeah, absolutely. They're all over that. The wing staff have knowledge of Pact. They know what Pact is. They will have seen her around; she's not shy about walking around and getting out and seeing people. (POM)*

## **Differences between the prisons**

Several major differences were noted between the two prisons which impacted on the role of the TaC Social Worker. The mothers in Eastwood Park were serving shorter sentences for less serious offences, this means a lot more through put of cases, in shorter time frames, and more involvement with the family courts. The mothers in HMP have larger families and more contact with children. In HMP Send the seriousness of the offences committed often means that many mothers would not be able to see their children or have only limited contact. Much of the role was therefore about explaining this to mothers and helping women to manage their expectations and cope with grief and loss of their mothering role.

The difference in size of the two institutions with HMP Send being significantly smaller and longer sentences being served, means that the TaC Social Worker in HMP Send has a longer period to be involved with mothers. In a smaller institution (HMP Send houses 200 women), it easier for staff to become known to each other and be aware of all the services operating within the institution.

In HMP Eastwood Park there is less established Pact team, which was carrying vacancies at the time of our visit, and as per the inspection report is a prison facing multiple challenges.

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## Mother and baby unit

HMP Eastwood Park have a mother and baby unit (MBU) and the TaC Social Worker has been able to contribute to their work,

*but sometimes women's children are going into care. ...they're going into care because we're waiting on a report for a place on the mother and baby unit because it's so heavily weighted on that report, as it should be. It means a huge amount. {She has been able to} push that, so it's just been helpful having her around... she'll come along to the actual boards. They're independently chaired video link. If she's been working with that person. But she'll always give advice to us on the cases that we have. (Governor)*

The TaC Social Worker has added to reports for the MBU, and advised with regard to children visiting,

*With a formal board for mums coming onto the unit. Then she'll add to reports, or she'll clarify points raised by, say, the nursery manager for ongoing care of a child, ...so she's helped with that.... She has written reports, yeah. ... if there a mum here with a child in the community, getting that child in, the interactions and how she believes she would settle on here. And also, for the more complex women on how we can better engage them here. Especially if contacts limited. Because we do all day visits on here. (Governor)*

The member of staff noted that the mother and baby unit is not at full capacity. 'On here we can hold a maximum of 12, but tops we normally hold about six'. The Governor noted that they would like the unit to be busier, 'Yeah, we want to be busier. We want more people on here'.

The mother and baby unit has a varied team, but cannot provide parenting assessments,

*We got nursery, we got a big nursery team, we got our PMBLO staff... Nursery manager and three nursery workers and....So the big - and the big negative mark we get against us is we're not a parenting unit, we don't teach people how to become parents.... I can say we've got a really experienced team; we've got a really good nursery team; we have midwifery care every week - which we want more of - but we have it once a week. Healthcare visitors and everything else. But when they say, 'Are you a parenting unit?' 'Well, no, we're not'. (Governor)*

We queried why the local authority could not commission an independent parenting assessment, and this potentially be done by staff based in the prison, as this would be an ideal opportunity to assess and strengthen parenting. Interestingly, it seems that women on the MBU can go to work

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while their children are looked after by the nursery (the working day is between 9.30-11.45 and 2.30- 4.45pm). The children are also taken out by nursery staff for socialisation reasons, to go swimming etc around four times per week, but their mothers cannot accompany them, so they cannot spend all of the time with them children,

*They do loads of stuff [inaudible ] but they go out four days a week. And I want to work towards ROTLing the women to go out with the nursery staff with babies; because we take them swimming, we take them to other nurseries... but swimming and some of the visits like train rides and all stuff like that, they could do. (Governor)*

It would seem to be vital that ROTL be utilised to enable women to go out with their children, to learn how to integrate and grow confidence in accessing community resources together with their child. The MBU do not provide parenting programmes, although we believe several nurturing courses have been run post Covid-19 lockdown. In the main mothers are assessed as suitable to go onto the MBU and upskilling their parenting is not a major focus. There will of course be cases where there are grey areas, for example, where professionals are unsure of a mother's capabilities, and whether she is suitable to access the unit, however if there is some doubt they could be assessed within the unit, so mothers may benefit from an opportunity to receive more of a structured plan and input. Should this be able to be facilitated it may increase occupancy of the MBU. If the MBU could undertake parenting assessments, this would help the meaningfulness and reliability of assessments undertaken and indeed support mothers in their parenting.

## **Suggested changes**

We asked all prison staff interviewed about the changes they would like to see to the TaC Social Worker role, and all said the role should be extended across the women's prison estate,

*Well, you say extend the role; from my point of view, it should be in place in every prison. (POM)*

Most suggested that the prison would benefit from more Social Workers,

*perhaps having two people doing that same role and reducing the workload. (POM)*

*I think she's got so much demand; I think often there's not enough of her to go around like. (Perinatal staff)*

*I think they're just so thin on the ground. 'I don't know how she's going to get around and see all these people'. Because I just think there needs to be more people. (POM)*

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There was a suggestion that mothers are well supported within the prison, but less so once released and this might be an area for further work,

*while in custody, they are getting huge amount of support {but on release very little}. (POM)*

In HMP Eastwood Park there was limited communication between POMs (this was noted in the tracker data as there were fewer referrals from POMs) and it was felt that the TaC Social Worker could be situated nearer the POMs and mention was made of new, larger rooms becoming available where staff could be situated together, so that clearer understanding of roles could develop, and further co-operation take place. It was also felt that more signposting and information could be made available to advertise the role,

*I'd say more work probably needs to be done, it's just - like I said, I think communication always helps because the more you communicate with people, the more you get to know like different departments and what they do and what offer they can support, to you as well what you can offer to them. (POM)*

This could involve presenting to different teams within the prison, putting posters up or sending email and PowerPoint information around to staff,

*{Could present at} The functional meetings and present about the role. Probably all staff briefings, but that would be absolutely terrifying... Or even just sending like a little PowerPoint round would be helpful, just to say like what they do, what they can help with, and how to contact them. (POM)*

It was noted however that this signposting might create more demand which probably could not be accommodated,

*Might just help people know it was there, and then I guess there'd be more signposting but then she'd be more under pressure. (POM)*

In addition, at HMP Eastwood Park there was some suggestion that the TaC Social Worker might help upskill other management staff, particularly in relation to safeguarding,

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A final issue was noted that when staff made referrals, they did not always get updated on developments or the outcome of involvement. It was felt that staff should be updated at least via the recording systems,

*On cases, and perhaps adding to recording notes. (POM)*

It must be remembered the difficult circumstances that Eastwood Park are facing (see comments from Inspection Report earlier in this report) and they did not have a FEW and had a vacancy for a family engagement manager (FEM).

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# Survey of prison staff

## Overview

A questionnaire was created to explore the views of prison staff who were willing to participate in the evaluation but who were unavailable to share their views directly during our prison visits in February 2023. The TaC social workers were asked to circulate the Participant Information Sheet and a link to the online questionnaire. This allowed the questionnaire to be submitted independently of the TaC social workers, respecting the anonymity of respondents.

This report is based on the valid responses (n=11) received by 27<sup>th</sup> April 2023. Whilst this small number does not easily lend itself to a robust and meaningful analysis, the findings are aligned with data from other sources. We are therefore reporting them as interim findings.

## Profile of respondents

The respondents worked at HMP Send (n=4) and HMP Eastwood Park (n=7) and represent both leadership and direct case-holding roles (see table 8). They also represent a cross-section of departments (see figure 8)

	HMP Send	HMP Eastwood Park	Total
Management/leadership role	2	1	3
Frontline role	2	6	8
<b>Total respondents</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>11</b>

Table 8: Profile of prison staff who submitted a valid questionnaire.

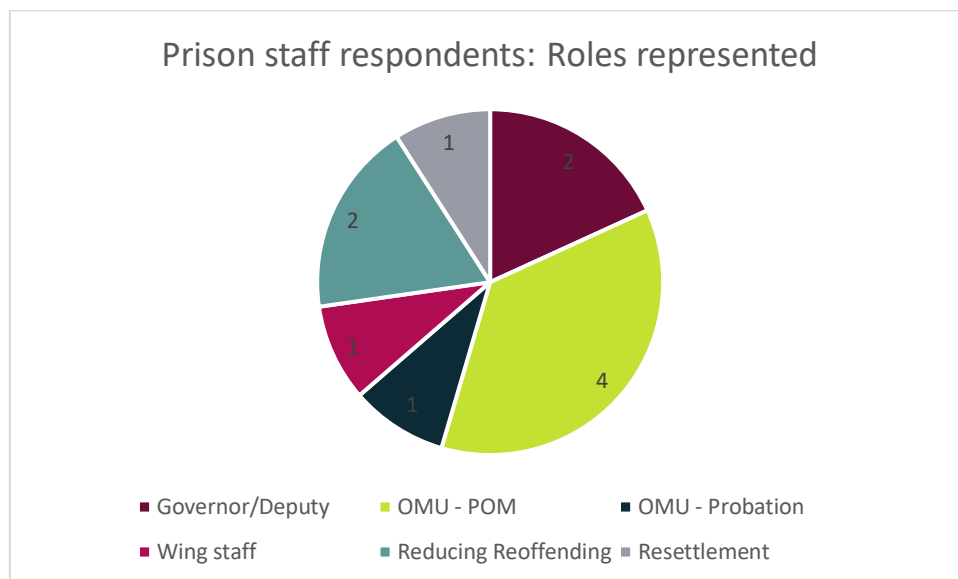


Figure 8: Current department of respondents

### Frequency and purpose of contact with the TaC Social Worker

Respondents were asked about their frequency of contact with the TaC Social Worker. Weekly contact was most commonly reported at both HMP Send (n=2) and HMP Eastwood Park (n=2). As expected, those in frontline case holding roles tended to report more frequent contact with the TaC Social Worker (see table 9).

	Frontline post	Management / leadership post	Total	%
Daily	1	0	1	9%
Weekly	5	1	6	55%
Monthly	2	1	3	27%

Less than monthly	0	1	1	9%
<b>Total</b>			<b>11</b>	<b>100%</b>

Table 9: Reported contact frequency between prison staff and the TaC social worker

Respondents were also asked about the purpose of their contact with the TaC Social Worker, and this was analysed by prison (see table xxx). The data received so far suggests that the Tac Social Worker at HMP Send is more routinely contacted for ad hoc advice, and this aligns to our observation that her location within the prison made her more visible and easily accessible to Prison Offender Managers (POMs).

	HMP Send (n=4)	HMP Eastwood Park (n=7)	Total (n=11)
Sent referral for a mother	2	5	7
Received general information/advice	4	5	9
Service updates	2	1	3
One-off case discussion	2	4	6
Co-worked a case	1	3	4

Table 10: Purpose of contact frequency between prison staff and the TaC social worker

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## Nature of work undertaken

Broader questions were also presented to prison staff to explore their perspective on the nature of the work undertaken by the TaC Social Worker:

- *In your view, what gaps within the prison does the role of the TaC social worker fill?*
- *How does the TaC social worker support mothers directly?*
- *How does the TaC social worker support a mother's relationships with her children and their carers?*
- *How does the TaC social worker support a mother's relationships with professionals in the community?*
- *How does the TaC service support rehabilitation and release planning?*
- *How does the TaC social worker's professional knowledge help other prison staff?*
- *How does the TaC social worker's prison knowledge support liaison with professionals in the community?*

The data produced from these responses was analysed thematically, and 22 themes were identified which grouped into four key, crosscutting themes: specialist knowledge and expertise; breaking down barriers for mothers in prison; important and trusted professional within the prison; direct support mothers in prison.

## Thematic analysis of responses

### Specialist knowledge and expertise

When asked about the gaps filled within the prison by the TaC Social Worker, the most prominent theme (n=10, 91%) emerging was (her) specialist knowledge and expertise. Linked to this, several respondents (n=7, 64%) cited the ability of the TaC social worker to navigate multiple systems, leading to improved multiagency and multidisciplinary liaison. Knowledge of services available in the community on release (n=6) and a 'different perspective' on the mother in prison (n=7) were highlighted as valuable in contributing to MDTs within the prison, where it was noted that the TaC social worker advocates for a woman's rights and responsibilities. The value to community professionals of having a 'peer' with knowledge of the prison was also noted (n=4), in terms of supporting community professionals to understand prison processes and how to navigate them.

*Specialist knowledge, advice, support, liaison, and intervention for parents in prison. Expert advice, guidance, and co-working for staff. The ability to navigate community and custodial services and improve multi-agency and multi-disciplinary communications. (Respondent 8, HMP Send)*

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*The role of TaC social worker allows staff and prisoners the chance to ask questions with quicker replies... The role also allows for another voice to be heard coming from a different angle. (Respondent 6, HMP Send)*

*Social Workers have valuable knowledge in their respective field which assists POMs with completion of OASys. (Respondent 10, HMP Eastwood Park)*

*[TaC Social Worker] has the expertise of social services. This is invaluable as I do not have the underpinning knowledge of the process and legality in which social services abide by. (Respondent 5, HMP Send)*

*It's a good point of contact in the prison to answer questions about social services or better understand the processes that the women are involved in. (Respondent 16, HMP Eastwood Park)*

*legal knowledge, child contact for complex prisoners, safeguarding support, communicating with family, facilitating ROTL to help mums e.g., court hearings and conferences high level of emotional support. (Respondent 15, HMP Eastwood Park)*

### **‘Breaking down barriers’ for mothers**

Almost all respondents (n=10, 91%) shared their view that the TaC Social Worker helped to address the power imbalance for mothers in prison by acting as a ‘go-between’. It was noted that this is a two-way process - respondents reported that the TaC Social Worker advocates for mothers in the professional arena (n=7, 64%), but also helps mothers to understand complex reasoning relating to decision making regarding their children (n=8, 73%).

*They set up professional meetings and act as a go between on occasions which helps the prisoners in difficult circumstances. (Respondent 6, HMP Send)*

*[TaC Social Worker] usually arranges the meetings and goes to them with mum to make sure it is as helpful as possible. This is good for mum because she can then talk about it with [TaC Social Worker] afterwards and [TaC Social Worker] lets us know if there is anything we need to know about. [TaC Social Worker] can explain what prison is like to professionals outside and this helps build relationships. (Respondent 15, HMP Eastwood Park)*

*... a point of contact for advice regarding social care matters, a point of contact for the women and their rights as a parent, a qualified social worker that can represent the mother*

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*and therefore be able to effectively challenge community social care teams. (Respondent 13, HMP Eastwood Park)*

*Providing support, advice, and guidance. Helping navigate the legal restrictions around child contact. Ensuring parents know their legal entitlements and the appropriate actions to take. Explaining complex situations and decisions in an accessible way. (Respondent 8, HMP Send)*

*There are often MASSIVE gaps in communication between community children's services and the women in custody. It is very difficult for women to involve themselves in processes. the TaC social worker is a vital part of ensuring women understand what is happening and are getting access to the things they are entitled to (e.g., court directed contact arrangements) (Respondent 16, HMP Eastwood Park)*

Here we can see how attending meetings with women supports them to be able to make a positive contribution. Additionally, TaC Social Workers support mothers to understand their legal entitlements.

### **Value of role-Important and trusted professional within the prison**

A third key theme relates to the value attributed to the TaC Social Worker as an important and trusted professional within the prison (n=9, 82%). It was reported that they were the 'single' or 'key' point of contact for prison staff in relation to children and family issues (n=5, 45%). Respondents noted that the TaC Social Worker's knowledge and expertise directly benefited professionals across the prison by upskilling staff in the 'legal landscape' and led to improved planning for mothers in prison, and 'stability' for prison personnel in their function. Some of the responses also reported wider benefit, beyond mothers on the TaC Social Worker's caseload, explaining that improved safeguarding across the prison supports offenders more generally, and this was attributed to explaining 'complex stuff' and 'highlighting issues' to Prison Offender Managers (n=5, 45%). Respondents also referred to the value of professional within the prison who could 'appropriately challenge' community social workers (n=4, 36%), as well as provide an effective community handover on release (n=4, 36%).

*They are invaluable. I have gone to the TaC many times asking advice on a matter or voicing concerns. They have been a real asset in providing stability for my function. (Respondent 6, HMP Send)*

*These roles are SO important! Although I have received safeguard training, actually having a trained Social Worker helps not only myself in my role, but the prisoners. I go to [TaC Social Worker] and her team for advice and guidance and we co-work on cases. The only*

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*gap is that there are not enough trained social workers at HMP Eastwood Park. (Respondent 14, HMP Eastwood Park)*

*Developing better understanding of the legal landscape and options available to parents in prison. (Respondent 8, HMP Send)*

*The Social works closely with the PMBLO's and assists with the Prison Offender managers. She has become an integral and important part of the team. (Respondent 9, HMP Eastwood Park)*

*With the limited and current poor training model for prison POMs in child safeguarding having a staff member with this knowledge is invaluable to helping offenders understand their legal rights and responsibilities. (Respondent 5, HMP Send)*

*[The TaC Social Worker] often gives us advice and talks to the women about things that we are not qualified to/don't know enough about to feel confident having those discussions. Becky has shared her knowledge with us about risk assessment and safeguarding. She has been able to work with some really challenging prisoners and helped them to engage better by explaining to us how to approach/work with them. (Respondent 15, HMP Eastwood Park)*

*...a qualified social worker that can represent the mother and therefore be able to effectively challenge community social care teams. (Respondent 13, HMP Eastwood Park)*

*At times it has been essential for me to get a better understanding of the processes and how these are impacting the women. It can be difficult (or slow) to get hold of social worker contact information, so TaC social worker provides a quick and effective way to get update and information. (Respondent 16, HMP Eastwood Park)*

## **Direct support to mothers in prison**

The final key theme identified in the questionnaire relates to the extent of the direct support to mothers in prison and the value of this (n=8, 73%). Apart from one respondent stating 'very sporadically' when asked how the TaC social worker reports mothers directly, prison staff who completed questionnaires provided detailed accounts of the support given, based on their experience of the TaC social worker. It was noted that the TaC Social Worker helps mothers to 'remove the prison barrier' by facilitating access to relevant professionals in relation to their children (n=6, 55%) and helps to resolve court issues, including enabling access to legal aid and explaining complex issues in an accessible way (n=8, 73%). Being based in the prison, they were able to promote the rights of incarcerated mothers by facilitating professional liaison with statutory services (n=6, 55%). Prison staff also commented on direct emotional and practical support (n=8, 73%), the creative way in which the TaC Social Worker managed contact between families appropriate to the offending history and family circumstances (n=6, 55%) and the support given to

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strengthen the bond with children and build parenting and communication skills with both children and their carers (n=5. 45%).

*I do not have a full specification of our TaC workers responsibilities within her role, but I have seen the following:- Our TaC worker hold meeting with our offenders daily to help and support mothers maintain contact with fostered children by arranging the video link that maintain this. Supporting mother by contacting children's schools for progression reports. Liaises with social services in the community to ensure that letter box contact for mothers who have had children removed is enforced. Arranges family days for mothers that provide a longer, more relaxed environment where mothers can have better interaction with their children and families. (Respondent 5, HMP Send)*

*... supporting women to access legal aid for family court matters. Providing advice as a qualified social worker. Emotional support. Representation at multi agency meetings (Respondent 13, HMP Eastwood Park)*

*There are a number of ways that the social worker supports the mothers. I think by far the most important of those is the support directly for the mother in the cases of family court. (Respondent 9, HMP Eastwood Park)*

*They make it [relationship with child] stronger and build on the bond already created, they don't allow prison to be a barrier to making a successful relationship. (Respondent 6, HMP Send)*

The comments relate to the support provided by the TaC Social Workers and the relationship they build with mothers.

## The role of the TaC Social Worker in relation to the healthy establishment tests

Although prison staff were not asked to comment specifically on the impact of the work undertaken by TaC Social Workers, detailed responses to the qualitative questions indicate that the role adopted in the pilot model acts as an enabler to positive outcomes for mothers in prison, as defined by the four tests defined in the framework for the inspection of prisons: safety, respect, purposeful activity and resettlement (HM Inspectorate of Prisons, 2022, p.18). In relation to safety, prison staff were specifically asked about whether their contact with the TaC Social Worker had included any involvement with the ACCT process, for mothers identified as being at risk of suicide or self-harm. In relation to the impact of the TaC Social Worker role on other outcomes, a further stage of analysis was undertaken to map the narrative responses to the healthy establishment tests.

## Safety - ACCT process involvement

The responses indicated that the TaC Social Worker's involvement in the ACCT process for mothers identified being at risk of suicide or self-harm is a more common occurrence at HMP Send (n=3, 75%) than HMP Eastwood Park (n=4, 57%). This highlights a possible difference in attitudes and multiagency working practices between the two prisons and reinforces our findings from observational data and interviews at both prisons.

Has your contact with the TaC social worker included any involvement with the ACCT process, for mothers identified at being at risk of suicide or self-harm?	Yes	No
<b>Management/leadership roles:</b>		
HMP Send	2	
HMP Eastwood Park	1	
<b>Frontline roles:</b>		
HMP Send	1	1
HMP Eastwood Park	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>

Table 11: Reported involvement of the TaC social worker in the ACCT process

Qualitative responses from those that reported that the Tac Social Worker was involved in the ACCT process were overwhelmingly positive:

*Our TaC worker attends my case reviews when necessary and is always helpful with explain [sic] the situations of the mother clearly and concisely which enables me to better identify potential risk factors that the offender could be suffering with, which they are unable to*

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*verbalise with uniformed staff. This knowledge of the offenders she works with and the rapport she has built aid in keeping offenders safe from themselves. (Prison Offender Manager, HMP Send)*

*Having them at an ACCT review can be crucial to help relieve worries and stress which could cause them to self-harm. (Prison leader, HMP Send)*

*Answered questions, provided clarity, appropriately inspired hope, and supported staff knowledge, and understanding of the case. (Prison leader, HMP Send)*

*mum's situation with her children is usually linked to self-harm, [the TaC Social Worker] helps with risk assessment and management, works as part of team to come up with solutions and reassures mum. [TaC Social Worker] is always able to share updates from community professionals like social services which helps us with our planning as well. (Prison officer, HMP Eastwood Park)*

*I have attended ACCT reviews where the TaC social worker has been present. Particularly relevant when self-harm has been following issues around mother's contact with her children. In that case it has been helpful to advise staff of the ongoing situation so support can be offered to the woman. (OMU Probation officer, HMP Eastwood Park)*

Reports of contributing to the safety of mothers in prison was not restricted to those prison staff who had been involved with the TaC Social Worker on the ACCT process. Other respondents have noted that the TaC Social Worker is 'another pair of eyes' in the prison:

*By assisting with maintaining contact and highlighting issues to POM/OMU. (Prison Offender Manager, HMP Eastwood Park)*

## **Respect /care**

The responses indicated that both the direct support given to mothers and the TaC Social Workers' ability to communicate complex professional 'jargon' in a way that is accessible to mothers and non-social work prison staff is highly valued and contributes to reduced stress and anxiety and increase wellbeing for mothers in prison. It was also clear from the responses that the support and creativity of the TaC Social Worker in facilitating contact in some form promotes family ties.

*Providing support, advice, and guidance. Helping navigate the legal restrictions around child contact. Ensuring parents know their legal entitlements and the appropriate actions to take. Explaining complex situations and decisions in an accessible way. (Respondent 8, HMP Send)*

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*Previously there was very little or no support for mothers in the prison who are going through the trauma of family courts and the separation from their children. Having the on-site social worker gives an advocate for the woman. The support that has been offered has been invaluable. (Respondent 9, HMP Eastwood Park)*

*The role of TaC social worker allows staff and prisoners the chance to ask questions with quicker replies. This can help when prisoners are needing to find out information urgently to help reduce stress and anxiety. The role also allows for another voice to be heard coming from a different angle. (Respondent 6, HMP Send)*

*Answers many questions I or my team may not know the answer too. Engages 1 to 1 with challenging cases. Supports contact and helps with Family Visits. (Respondent 6, HMP Send)*

*I have witnessed [the TAC Social Worker] build on contact, calls, video links with children, work with the community, contact centres, ROTLs, you name it, she's done it. (Respondent 7, HMP Send)*

*Providing emotional support to build relationships. (Respondent 8, HMP Send)*

*Liaises with social services in the community to ensure that letter box contact for mothers who have had children removed is enforced. Arranges family days for mothers that provide a longer, more relaxed environment where mothers can have better interaction with their children and families. (Respondent 5, HMP Send)*

*When a woman enters prison, it is incredibly difficult to get the advice and support they need. For them trying to make the appropriate contacts and to understand the system is almost impossible. I think the pilot has absolutely shown the value of have a social worker in the prison. (Respondent 9)*

## **Purposeful activity**

Although only one respondent referred to 'group work' specifically, suggesting that this is not a regular occurrence, numerous others referred to greater engagement of mothers in prison when describing their observations of the work of the TaC Social Worker.

*group work to help support mothers in custody and give them tools to be better parents, strength, and knowledge in the community. (Respondent 7, HMP Send)*

*I have not been part of the meeting that the TaC worker hold with the offenders she works with so I cannot fully answer this question, however I have a few offenders on my caseload who are support by her and they all sing the praises and comment on the work they are conducting with the TaC worker. (Respondent 5, HMP Send)*

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*Developing and nurturing appropriate skills to communicate effectively with children and carers. (Respondent 8, HMP Send)*

*Our TaC worker hold meeting with our offenders daily to help and support mothers maintain contact with fostered children by arranging the video link that maintain this. (Respondent 5, HMP Send)*

*I have witnessed [the TAC Social Worker] build on contact, calls, video links with children, work with the community, contact centres, ROTLs, you name it, she's done it. (Respondent 7, HMP Send)*

Here we can see TaC Social Workers assisting mothers to improve their communication skills with their children and develop tools to be better parents.

### **Rehabilitation and release planning /resettlement**

Prison staff were asked directly how the role of the TaC Social Worker supports rehabilitation and release planning. It should be noted that the offender profile is quite different across the two prisons included in the pilot: sentences tended to be significantly longer at HMP Send, with a higher incidence of contact restriction due to nature of offence, some of which have been committed against children. Additionally, the specialist services offered at each prison (a Therapeutic Community at HMP Send and a mother and Baby Unit at HMP Eastwood Park) are likely to lead to a different role for the TaC Social Workers in terms of rehabilitation and release planning.

The responses given suggest that for those mothers who are approaching their release date, the role of the TaC Social Worker contributes to a 'positive release' due to knowledge of appropriate services in the community and professional links with statutory children's services as originally envisaged in the development of the role. For those mothers for whom the focus is rehabilitation, the data collected suggests that the maintenance of links with children offers hope and a goal to work towards. Respondents have also commented on the TaC Social Workers' helping mothers in prison to reframe, and this aligns with both direct observations of 'positive challenge' during prison visits and also feedback from mothers in interviews.

*From my experience the TAC service has been a key role in release planning for some of the clients I have worked with. They have provided detailed handovers for the professionals working with the clients in community. Engaging and supporting the clients to be ready for release - whether this is providing emotional support or advice about the clients next steps in community. (Respondent 13, HMP Eastwood Park)*

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*Contributing to MDTs to ensure all agencies/departments understand what is available by way of support and intervention. (Respondent 5, HMP Send)*

*By providing hope and support for building positive relationships with children whilst the offender is in custody. (Respondent 5, HMP Send)*

*100% - they work with interventions within the prison to ensure the best outcome is achieved through team work and all having the same goal. (Respondent 7, HMP Send)*

*[The TaC Social Worker] does a lot of work with the women that gives them hope and something good to work towards, and this is really important when it comes to reducing reoffending. [The TaC Social Worker] helps the women to look at things differently to how they may have in the past, and work with professionals who can support them to continue to make progress by building these relationships while they are in prison. (Respondent 15, HMP Eastwood Park)*

Inculcating hope was mentioned numerous times in the survey and within our interviews, and this would seem to be a significant part of the TaC Social Worker role, as vital for mothers to remain positive whilst in prison. However, there are cases where inculcating this hope of seeing their children is not possible because of the seriousness of the mother's offending, we discussed this in interviews with prison staff and have received case studies demonstrating the nature of the work in such situations, with the TaC Social Worker trying to manage expectations and balancing these with suicide risks.

## Views on the role going forward

Finally, respondents were asked questions relating to what the role may look like going forward, specifically, their opinion on the attributes of the current model, namely having a qualified Social Worker allocated to and based in the prison.

### **What level of staff knowledge and expertise is important if the TaC service were to roll out to other prisons?**

Respondents had mixed views about whether the role should be undertaken by a qualified Social Worker (n=8) or whether the level and type of qualifications is unimportant (n=3). Whilst 75% of all respondents in each prison thought that having a qualified Social Worker in the role was important, there seemed to be variation across job roles and departments. Respondents at a more

senior job role (n=3) all reported that a qualified Social Worker in the role is important. At Eastwood Park, staff in the Offender Management Unit had mixed views with only 50% recommending that the role must be filled by a qualified Social Worker, this may be because some staff in the OMU are probation trained, albeit since the 1980s this is very different from social work training. This suggests some ambivalence or lack of contact with the OMU. In contrast, whilst the questionnaire was only completed by one member of staff in the OMU at HMP Send they thought being a qualified Social Worker important. Notably, our findings from all the face-to-face interviews with prison staff during our visits, and all other staff consulted were of the opinion that the role should be fulfilled by a qualified Social Worker (see table 12).

	Qualified social worker	Qualification does not matter
<b>HMP Send:</b>		
Leader/manager	2	
OMU staff	1	
Other frontline role		1
<b>HMP Eastwood Park:</b>		
Leader/manager	1	
OMU staff	2	2
Other frontline role	2	
<b>Total</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>

Table 12: Responses regarding level of qualification for the role

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Those that had specified qualified Social Worker were asked why they thought this was beneficial to outcomes, and they highlighted the importance of their knowledge, skills and understanding of social work processes for achieving credibility and building trust with mothers in prison.

*Knowledge and understanding of the processes are key for building the trust and developing rapport with offenders who can be extremely complex. If the role was held by a staff member without this then it would be counterproductive as the offenders respect the work output as they know that it is based on knowledge, truth, and experience.*

(Prison Offender Manager, HMP Send)

*Having dealt with many social workers over the years , I can see the benefits of having one all the time at HMP Send. Their knowledge and skill sets work well within OMU and also my department of children and families.*

(Manager/leader, HMP Send)

*To ensure accurate, up to date, relevant skills, knowledge, and experience.*

(Manager/leader, HMP send)

*The knowledge and training give the role more credibility. It is important that both the woman and professionals know they are working with someone who fully understands the processes and how social work is carried out in the community. That link is really important to our mothers in prison.*

(Manager/leader, HMP Eastwood Park)

Raynor (2016) has noted the different skill level between probation and social workers, especially in building relationships. For those who did not think the qualification was important, responses included 'not seen evidence' and 'provide a link with outside agencies', this may have indicated. Lack of understanding of the role or saw the role of TaC Social Workers in linking staff to outside agencies being their primary role.

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### Is it important that the TaC Social Worker is based at the prison?

Respondents were overwhelmingly of the view that the Tac Social Worker should be based at the prison (n=10); one respondent stated 'not privy to this' when asked who the social worker's prison knowledge supports professionals in the community. In addition to highlighting the importance of understanding the prison regime, respondents stated the importance of building effective relationships with both staff and prisoners, stating that 'helping daily' ensures 'a smoother process for all'.

*...The knowledge and understanding of how a prison operates is vital to setting realistic expectations to the offenders. Having a staff member on sight [sic] is a great resource as she is always available and quick to respond to the questions posed as they have the understanding of the complexities of the offenders and how the prison regime can be impactful to maintaining family ties ... I believe that having staff available on a phone or email without the knowledge of the prison setting would be detrimental to building the rapport with the offender who engage with the TaC worker.*

(Prison offender manager, HMP send)

*The dynamic of Eastwood Park is that things change so frequently that being based in the prison is essential to the role.*

(Resettlement worker, HMP Eastwood Park)

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## Survey completed by community practitioners

Four community practitioners completed the survey in Year 2, including two Social Workers, one solicitor, and one parent advocate (see table 13). The results from the Year 2 survey have been combined with the five responses from Year 1 and the cumulative findings are discussed in this section.

	Year 1	Year 2
Children's guardian	1	
Parent advocate		1
School safeguarding lead	1	
Social worker	3	2
Solicitor		1
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>

**Table 13:** Participant overview for community practitioner survey

## Findings from community practitioner survey

The community practitioners described their involvement with the TaC service as a '*positive experience*', '*really helpful*', and a '*great support*'. All participants (n = 9) agreed that the service was important in providing support to the mother. Most agreed that the service had supported the child (n = 7) and the Social Worker in the community (n = 6), and four agreed that the service had

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supported the children's carer. The practitioners' views on the support that the TaC service provided to the mothers, children, carers, and professionals are outlined below.

## Mothers

All participants agreed that mothers had been more involved in decision making about their children because of the TaC service. Most agreed mothers had been better represented in key meetings (n = 7) and more empowered to receive regular family visits because of the service (n = 5). Everyone reported that the TaC service had changed the prison experience for the mother and child relationship. Participants commented that the service had enabled '*more positive and frequent contact*' between the mother and child and supported the mother to manage contact '*in a child friendly way*'. One participant described that the support provided by the service had made the relationship between the mother and child '*more natural*'. This concurs with the survey from prison staff as noted above.

Participants reported that there had been no negative effects of the TaC service for mothers. Everyone agreed that the mothers will be more able to settle back into the community because of the service, and eight agreed that the mothers will be more able to settle back into her family and less likely to re-offend after release. Here we can see how community practitioners perceived the benefits of the service in reintegration with family and community post release.

## Children

Six participants reported that the TaC service had improved the relationship between the child and mother. Three participants reported that the child was more settled in their placement because of the service. No one reported that the child was less settled, and everyone agreed that there had been no negative effects of the service for children.

## Carers

Most participants (n = 6) reported that the TaC service had helped carers liaise with home Social Workers and made visiting easier whilst the mother was in prison. Five participants agreed that the TaC service had improved the relationship between the carer and child, and four agreed that the service had improved the relationship between the carer and mother.

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## Multi-agency working

Nearly all (n = 8) participants reported that the TaC Social Worker had been a useful resource for practitioners in the community. Participants described that the TaC Social Worker had provided practitioners with a *'better understanding of how the mother was doing'* and information about the *'mother's parenting capacity during prison visits with the children'*.

Eight participants reported that the TaC Social Worker had helped to improve the relationship between the home Social Worker and the mother. One participant commented that the TaC Social Worker had *'enabled and supported [the home] Social Worker to stay in touch with the mother so that she can be involved in decisions made about her children.'* They explained, *'The mother's voice would have been lost otherwise'*.

The TaC Social Worker regularly facilitated contact between community practitioners and mothers. A solicitor said that the TaC Social Worker had made it easier for them to arrange to meet their client remotely. This enabled them to share information and advice *'in a private and timely way'* and ensure the mother was involved in the court process:

*The Together a Chance scheme has made it far easier to make arrangements to meet with the client remotely, to share information, to ensure that advice can be given in a private and timely way. It has made it easier to ensure the client is informed of the court process and ensure their attendance... The benefits of this service also include ensuring the mother feels as though she is receiving fair treatment within the court proceedings and is fully involved which is often a cause for concern for a parent in prison.*

Most (n = 7) participants reported that the TaC Social Worker had become a valued member of the team around the family. Five participants reported that the TaC Social Worker had made links to support agencies in the home community to help garner support for the mother on release (for example, with housing services). This conduit of information role is continued to be seen as a vital aspect of their role.

## Upskilling the social care workforce

Seven participants agreed that the TaC Social Worker had provided advice to social care workers in the community. Two participants reported that the TaC Social Worker had provided training for workers in the community about mothers in prison.

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### Improvements suggested by community practitioners

Two participants recommended that the TaC service should be rolled out nationally. Another participant recommended recruiting *'more prison Social Workers to allow the workers greater time with each mother and child'*. Participants also suggested publicising the service widely to increase awareness and providing mothers with longer-term support in the community once they are released from prison.

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## Survey completed by mothers

Mothers were invited to complete a questionnaire when they started to work with their TaC Social Worker (T1) and six months later (T2). In Year 2, 15 mothers completed a questionnaire at T1, and six mothers completed a questionnaire at T2. These questionnaires have been combined with the 23 T1 and 14 T2 questionnaires that were completed in Year 1, and the cumulative results are presented below.

	Intervention start (T1)	6-month follow up (T2)
Year 1	23	14
Year 2	15	6
<b>Total questionnaires from mothers</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>20</b>

**Table 14:** Responses received for survey completed by mothers

## Findings from survey completed by mothers

### Hopes for the Together a Chance service

At T1, mothers were asked what they hoped to achieve with the support of their TaC Social Worker. Many mothers wanted help to improve their relationship and communication with Children's Social Services:

*'More help and better communication with children's services. To be included more and feel heard on my needs and opinions. Sometimes I struggle to feel involved or heard. Just need extra support and be more involved'*

Mothers were also frequently looking for support to access updates about their children and arrange contact and visits, where possible:

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*'To carry on with my updates and to eventually see if social services will give me more contact'*

*'Hope to have regular contact with my daughter and hopefully a visit at some point'*

Some mothers were focused on working towards their release from prison and looking for help in planning for their future:

*'I hope to achieve with the support of my [TaC Social] Worker a plan going forward that contains the steps I need to take upon my release so that I can hopefully start to get some form of contact with my children and support around that and anything else that needs to be done within the family.'*

## Views on Children's Social Services

Over 80% of mothers reported that they were willing to engage with Children's Social Services at T1 and T2 (see table 14). There was a slight increase in the proportion of mothers who felt they could trust Children's Social Services to help their families at T2 (42% vs 34% at T1). However, trust and confidence in working with Children's Social Services remained low at T2.

	T1		T2	
	n	%	n	%
<b>I am willing to engage with Children's Social Services.</b>				
Strongly agree or agree	32	84	15	83
Not sure	4	11	1	6
Strongly disagree or disagree	2	5	2	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>

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**I can trust Children's Social Services to help my family.**

Strongly agree or agree	13	34	8	42
Not sure	10	26	4	21
Strongly disagree or disagree	15	39	7	37
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100</b>

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**I am confident working with Children's Social Services.**

Strongly agree or agree	12	32	7	39
Not sure	10	27	5	28
Strongly disagree or disagree	15	41	6	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100</b>

*Note. The totals do not always add up to 38 at T1 and 20 at T2 due to missing answers.*

Table 14: Mothers' perceptions of Children's Social Services

### Support from professionals

Most mothers felt moderately or extremely supported in their role as a mother by professionals inside the prison (76%), and this increased after engaging with the TaC service (95%; see Table 2). Most mothers felt not at all or slightly supported by professionals outside the prison at both timepoints (68% and 79%).

	T1		T2	
	n	%	n	%
<b>Feel supported by professionals inside the prison.</b>				
Moderately or extremely	28	76	18	95
Somewhat	5	14	0	0
Not at all or slightly	4	11	1	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Feel supported by professionals outside the prison.</b>				
Moderately or extremely	7	19	4	21
Somewhat	5	14	0	0
Not at all or slightly	25	68	15	79
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100</b>

*Note. The totals do not always add up to 38 at T1 and 20 at T2 due to missing answers.*

Table 15. Mothers' feelings of support inside and outside prison

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## Involvement in meetings

Mothers rated how involved they felt in the decisions that were made about their children's care on a scale from one (not at all involved) to ten (extremely involved). There was a slight improvement over time with mothers rating their involvement in decisions as a four at T1 and five at T2. A higher proportion of mothers felt that they were always or often able to share their views in meetings about their children's care after working with the TaC Social Worker (37% vs 28%; see Table 3). However, over half of mothers felt rarely or never listened to by professionals in the community at both timepoints.

	T1		T2	
	n	%	n	%
<b>How often able to share views in meetings about your children's care?</b>				
Always or often	10	28	7	37
Sometimes	7	19	2	11
Rarely or never	19	53	10	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>How often do you feel that your views about your children's care are listened to by professionals in the community?</b>				
Always or often	8	22	5	26
Sometimes	9	25	4	21
Rarely or never	19	53	10	53
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>100</b>

*Note. The totals do not always add up to 38 at T1 and 20 at T2 due to missing answers.*

Table 16. Mothers' ability to share views in meetings about their children's care

## Relationship with their children's Social Worker

On average, mothers rated their relationship with their children's Social Worker as a four on a scale from one (very poor) to ten (excellent) at T1 and T2. Less than half of mothers (47% at T1 and 45% at T2) were able to complete the Working Alliance Inventory (Horvath and Greenberg, 1989) for their children's Social Workers as they had not met them or rarely meet with them.

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## Views on the Together a Chance service

All mothers (n = 20) were 'very satisfied' with their TaC Social Worker at T2. Everyone reported that they felt listened to by their TaC Social worker and received practical support, for example, with contacting professionals or finding information. Ninety per cent (n = 18) reported that they received emotional support from their TaC Social Worker, and that their worker had helped them to feel more confident planning for their family's future.

Mothers described that their TaC Social Worker had helped them to receive updates about their children, and arrange contact and visits:

*'She has helped me with absolutely everything from setting up apps and video calls to getting back on track with letterbox contact.'*

*'[name of TaC Social Worker] has helped me have video link with my daughter and has built my confidence up.'*

The TaC Social Worker also helped mothers to establish better communication with professionals in the community, such as solicitors, their children's teachers, and home Social Workers:

*'Finding and getting hold of child social outside and arranging very important meetings and visits – letting solicitors know of my whereabouts for family court hearings.'*

*'She has been able to make the contact with the people I couldn't. This is invaluable to me.'*

Several mothers explained that their TaC Social Worker supported them to be involved in key meetings and attend court hearings:

*'She has supported me through all my court hearings and emotionally after my hearings.'*

*'keeping me involved in meetings and helping me to read and write'*

Mothers were asked what the most helpful thing has been about their TaC Social Worker, and they frequently described their TaC Social Worker's ability to listen without judgement and provide emotional support:

*'Just listening to me and understanding my frustrations.'*

*'She listens to me, and we can be open/honest with each other'*

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Mothers also valued their TaC Social Worker's knowledge, advice, and support in helping them to understand a situation or overcome a problem:

*'Her knowledge helps me massively to understand things.'*

*'Any problem I have you make smaller and easier for me to digest.'*

*'Advice, understanding, listening, problem solving to enable myself and Local Authority to move forward in the best interest of my child.'*

Several mothers appreciated how reliable their TaC Social Worker had been during their time working together:

*'She never ever lets me down or doesn't turn up'*

*'She always delivers. If she says something she follows through. She's amazing and helped me so much and impacted my life greatly in a good way. She's the best social worker help I've ever had. I'd have not coped without her at all.'*

### Improvements suggested by mothers

Mothers did not identify any ways to improve the TaC service. Instead, mothers described their TaC Social Worker as *'brilliant'*, *'very supportive but fair'* and *'a massive support for me and my family'*. One mother said, *'I wish they had more power to contact court and speak in hearings.'*

However, over half of mothers felt rarely or never listened to by professionals in the community at both timepoints. On average, mothers rated their relationship with their children's Social Worker as a four on a scale from one (very poor) to ten (excellent) at T1 and T2. Less than half of mothers (47% at T1 and 45% at T2) were able to complete the Working Alliance Inventory (Horvath and Greenberg, 1989) for their children's Social Workers as they had not met them or rarely met with them. Mothers were asked what the most helpful thing has been about their TaC Social Worker, and they frequently described their TaC Social Worker's ability to listen without judgement and provide emotional support.

*'She always delivers. If she says something she follows through. She's amazing and helped me so much and impacted my life greatly in a good way. She's the best social worker help I've ever had. I'd not have coped without her at all.'*

Participants also suggested publicising the service widely to increase awareness and providing mothers with longer-term support in the community once they are released from prison.

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## Conclusion

The evidence collected over this second interim report suggests that the role of the TaC Social Worker is invaluable to the prison institution. The TaC Social Worker provides specialist knowledge of safeguarding and of social services' processes, priorities, culture, language, and terminology which is of assistance both to mothers and to prison staff. The TaC Social Worker also helps to upskill staff in 'the legal landscape'. The TaC Social Worker acts as a conduit of information between local authority practitioners and the prison establishment, as well as between mothers and community practitioners.

The TaC Social Worker' knowledge base does not seem to be held elsewhere within the institution and so there is little if any duplication of work between roles. Probation POMs have a similar knowledge base but it is reported they have insufficient understanding of the statutory children's social care environment to meet the needs and demands of mothers in prison.

The vast majority of respondents, (the only exceptions being three POMs completing the survey for prison staff) felt that the prison Social Worker should be social work qualified.

TaC Social Workers are acting as mediators for mothers to support their engagement with social services, advocating for contact with children appropriate to the circumstance, and ensuring that wherever possible relationships are maintained. This instils hope in mothers who have goals to work towards.

The TaC Social Workers are providing information and education to community practitioners and have developed a resource for them to help support professionals in explaining to children where their mothers are.

Where a mother has more than one child, 68% of siblings are separated whilst their mother is in prison in 68% of cases. The mothers originate from 31 local authorities, and the TaC Social Workers have connected with 56 local authorities. Each TaC Social Worker has worked with a different set of local authorities, with the exception of Devon, Bridgend, and Oxfordshire (which both have worked with). This would make it difficult for a Social Worker to be based in any one local authority.

There are still some difficulties in imprisoned mothers attending virtual meetings with social services.

It is felt by prison staff that the nature of the trusting and supportive relationship that the TaC Social Worker builds with imprisoned mothers serves to reduce suspicion and regain trust in Social Workers in the community, increasing the likelihood of an improved working alliance in the future. Our cumulative data reveals an increase in the proportion of mothers who felt they could trust Children's Social Services to help their families at 6-month follow-up (42% vs 34% at the start of the intervention). Whilst mothers do feel an increased trust in children's social services after involvement with TaC, trust still remains low.

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All mothers were 'very satisfied' with their TaC Social Worker in T2 follow-up surveys. The vast majority of mothers (95 %) reported feeling supported by professionals within the prison, but most (79%) reported feeling not at all or only slightly supported by professionals outside.

The nature of the work in each prison differs with women in HMP Send having committed more serious offences and being less likely to have contact or have children live with them in the future, and thus the focus is often supporting women to manage expectations and their feeling of loss and despair, with risk management around child contact playing a significant role.

In both prisons The TaC Social Workers play a significant role in managing self-harm and risk of suicide through the ACCT process, by mothers again a focus of the healthy prison tests.

The role of the Social Worker is embedded into both prisons, although more work could be done in HMP Eastwood Park to link with POMs.

The overriding view was that the TaC Social Workers should be based within the prison, although there were differing views about who should employ them, the Ministry of Justice or third sector organisation like Pact.

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